







SELF'S THE MAN

BOOKS BY
JOHN DAVIDSON.

PLAYS

FLEET STREET ECLOGUES

Two Series

BALLADS AND SONGS

NEW BALLADS

GODFRIDA

THE LAST BALLAD, AND
OTHER POEMS

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SELF'S THE MAN

A TRAGI-COMEDY

BY

JOHN DAVIDSON

"Be your own star, for strength is from within ;
And one against the world will always win."

160829.

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PERSONS

URBAN . . .	}	<i>Rivals for the throne of Lombardy.</i>
LUCIAN . . .		
THRASIMUND . . .		<i>A demagogue.</i>
HILDEBRAND . . .	}	<i>Of LUCIAN's party.</i>
ADALBERT . . .		
LUDOLF . . .		
PASQUAL . . .	}	<i>Of URBAN's party.</i>
THE DUKE OF GARDA .		
ALMERIC . . .	}	<i>At first of LUCIAN's party ; but</i>
ULRIC . . .		
		<i>from the Second Act of URBAN's.</i>
PHILADELPHUS . . .		<i>A philosopher.</i>
JUNIPERT . . .		<i>A poet.</i>
THE BISHOP OF PAVIA.		
SATURNIA . . .		URBAN's mistress.
OSMUNDA . . .		HILDEBRAND's daughter.
VIOLANTE . . .		THRASIMUND's wife.
SYBIL . . .		URBAN's daughter.
<i>A Physician, a Blacksmith, a Vinedresser, a Shepherd, a Messenger, a Priest, a Merchant, a Man, Acolytes, Lords, Ladies, Nuns, Citizens, Soldiers, Servants, the Rabble, and</i>		
SATURNIA's Retinue.		

SELF'S THE MAN

ACT I

THE ELECTION

SCENE.—*The outskirts of Pavia. A grassy knoll rises near the centre of the stage, and is crowned by a moss-grown rock which has been rudely squared. At the back and left and right are clumps of old chestnut trees in flower. The walled city is behind.*

It is towards noon in the beginning of summer.

Lords, ladies, citizens, etc., pass and re-pass among the trees. It is evident that a crowd is gathering.

PHILADELPHUS *and* JUNIPERT *enter right and left.*

PHILADELPHUS *is bearded ; his hair, unkempt. He is stout, ruddy, and cheerful-looking ; dressed in a ragged brown robe and wearing sandals ; he carries a stout stick.*

JUNIPERT *is slender, with long dark hair. He is dressed in rusty black, and carries tablets in which he is writing.*

PHIL. (*intercepting* JUNIPERT). Have I imagined it, or did we meet?

You prey on faded wardrobes ; and the rust
Of ancient armour is your condiment :
A vamer of archaic vocables,
Extinct mythologies, illicit lore,
And general obsolescence : poet still,
Courageously, and in contempt of time.

JUNI. And I know you, sir : a philosopher ;

One that has given in to fate ; that bows
The knee to the inevitable ; ass
Of the world's old burden, thought ; and
turnspit, wheeled
To reason in a circle endlessly.

PHIL. Believe it, since you must. I deem
myself

Intelligence essential.—What is that ?

JUNI. The coronation-stone of Lombardy,
As every crow can tell.

PHIL. And do you know
That here, within the hour, the Lombards
meet

To choose their king ?

JUNI. Of course I know !

PHIL. And waste
Your brain on longs and shorts ? You cannot
know !

Think : to be king !—At some time in his
life

The aim of every mother's son.

JUNI. Not so!

The poet ranks above the highest king.

PHIL. Believe it, if you can. But I profess

Philosophy—the cult of good and ill.

Being, as I am, a representative,

A packed compendium, of humanity,

My pulses, nerves—my whole assembly aches

With antepastoral jealousy of him

Who shall be crowned to-day; and I am
come

To breed, in the locality and air

Of this event, a project I have hatched,

Whereby to seize a notoriety

That shall eclipse the firmament of fame

About to open on a royal head

Unknown as yet.

JUNI. Foolish philosopher!

Look: I indite a poem as I walk,

Behold erasure and a threshing-floor ;

A strife, a granary, a monument !

PHIL. But yours is the appeal to aftertimes.

Who ever heard posterity applaud !

No ; I must have my name dance on the
tongues

Of all men in my hearing.

[*compels JUNIPERT to sit on the
coronation-stone.*]

Aribert,

King of the Lombards, died a week ago,

And sepulchred in royal state he lies.

On the same day died Martin Rustyblade,

The headsman, and was shovelled into earth—

A furtive burial. Now, you are king—

But think so !—crowned, enthroned. I, with
my staff

And sandals——

JUNI. Look who comes !

[*rises and is about to go out.*]

PHIL. Old Thrasimund !

No room for us where he perambulates !

This way—with me. I must rehearse the part
I'll act at the election of the king.

[They go out together.]

Enter from the right THRASIMUND, ALMERIC, ADALBERT, LUDOLF, and ULRIC. THRASIMUND is an old man with grey beard and scanty locks well trimmed. He enters quickly in advance of the others, looking about on all sides.

ADALBERT and LUDOLF are between fifty and sixty years of age : officials.

ALMERIC and ULRIC are young and handsome.

THRA. Where is my wife ? *[goes out testily.]*

ADAL. He should, indeed, be told.

His dotage undermines his old renown :

Our party suffers. Shall we bluntly say,

"Now, Thrasimund, your wife the world knows
well

Is deep in love with Urban. She has sent
Apparent missives; she has flung him looks.
True, Urban's passion for Saturnia
Absorbs him wholly; but at twenty-five
Love is a Rambler. Heed it, Thrasimund."

LUD. Explicit. And commend his own
repute

To his best care; for when an oldster weds
A lusty girl he pawns his character,
And seldom is the shabby pledge redeemed
Even by the most heroic wariness.

ALM. And be derided for your wittolhood!
Best leave December and the fateful May
To thaw and freeze and make a season out
With weather of their own.

ULR. The climate there
Is treacherous, I've heard, for come-betweens.—
Have you seen Lucian yet?—Ah, Hildebrand!

Enter HILDEBRAND from the left. He is about sixty years old, but looks younger. His face is powerful and eager, its original frankness obscured by craft, long thwarted but still alive and hopeful.

HILD. (*indignantly as he enters*). Men are more obstinate, more volatile,
More rash, more pusillanimous than flies!

ALM. Some men, my lord.

HILD. Six that I know of, sir!

But where is Lucian?

ALM. None of us can tell.

HILD. He left his house before the dawn,
they say.

Where can he be? And Thrasimund?

[ALMERIC *points out* THRASIMUND.]

Antique

Afflictive amorist, with honeyed wine

That only youth can carry, love I mean,

Unnerved and sodden !

[*Re-enter THRASIMUND with VIOLANTE. VIOLANTE is about twenty-five years old ; a harebrained, voluptuous woman.*]

All our skill that joined
Inveterate enmities—I greet you, madam—
Our drudgery in herding fools, our high
Elaborate hopes are squandered and engulfed
As in a quicksand, never to be found.

VIOL. How ! Have the waverers abandoned
you ?

HILD. Not one ! Not one ! But six false
lords we deemed

Securely rooted in our interests.

VIOL. Six !

You lose the election, then. What are their
names ?

HILD. Perish their names !

VIOL. How were the traitors bribed ?

HILD. By Urban's subtle charm, by that alone.

VIOL. He has I know not what of careless grace ;

A look, a tone——

THRA. Effeminate, I say !

Unstable, wanton, glib, and arrogant.

He jests at worth and age ; and——

HILD. What you say

Is certain. Lucian is the nobler man ;

But our emergency could overlook

In him his rival's fortune that converts

Six enemies at supper with a word.

LUD. Is there no scheme to countervail
this blow ?

*Enter from the left a Messenger running at a
measured pace.*

THRA. One never knows.

HILD. What messenger is that ?

Quick, bring him here! He may have news
for us.

[ALMERIC and ULRIC follow the
Messenger and return with him.]

VIOL. Or for your enemies.

THRA. For us then still;

And more significantly too.

HILD. (*to the Messenger*). The letter.

MESS. (*affecting stupidity*). O sir, my lord,
your excellency—pray,

Which is the way to Pavia, here or there?

HILD. The letter that you carry!

MESS. Thanks, my lord! [*tries to escape.*]

HILD. Search him!

[*The Messenger is searched, and a letter
taken from the breast of his tunic.*]

THRA. (*seizing the letter*). For Urban!

HILD. Who commissioned you?

MESS. What have they found? Who says
I stole it? Shame!

HILD. A rogue that serves his master as
he can!

THRA. From the Duke of Garda! [*reading.*] "It is rumoured here"—he writes from Ravenna—"It is rumoured here that the more potent voice of the nobility will support Lucian. I and my company are at your disposal. The Exarch of Ravenna offers aid. Be king by right of conquest. Lombardy remains a mere scaffold, an untied faggot until the monarchy becomes absolute."

HILD. This to Urban from the Duke of
Garda, known
A base self-seeker, who would set the world
At war, so he might gather odds and ends
Dropped in the scuffle!

THRA. If we publish now
That Urban is in league with one endured
Only by those who need him; if we taint
His name with treason!

VIOL. But we know not that ;
Because had Lucian stood in Urban's shoes
He might have had this letter.

THRA. Gently urged !
You have the grace so to suppose ; but
men

Will think the worst—and very vilely too,
As I intend. This letter, closed again,
Must be delivered in the public sight,
While I harangue the assembly. Bitterly
I shall accuse him : " Let the letter speak !"
Shall be my cry. When this is read aloud
The six recalcitrants are ours once more !

HILD. If he decline to have his letter
read ?

THRA. He stands confessed a traitor
obvious !

Better for us if he decline to read !
I shall so press it home that either way
He loses the election. I am deſt

At these contrivances. A little heat
Will mend this seal, and shiver Urban's
luck.—

Ludolf, your house is scarce a stone's throw
hence.

[THRASIMUND, VIOLANTE, ADAL-
BERT, LUDOLF, *and the Mes-*
senger go out]

ALM. (*looking to the right*). They have left
the city. The Bishop brings the crown.

HILD. Lucian is with the Bishop, I sup-
pose.

ALM. He should have been with us.

HILD. Where is my daughter?

I see her, now. Ask her to come to me.

ALM. She comes unbidden.—Let us meet
them, Ulric.

[ALMERIC *and* ULRIC *go out*
together.]

Enter OSMUNDA. She is in her twentieth year, but looks younger; is tall and fair. Her face, in repose almost expressionless, becomes exceedingly mobile when her attention is aroused.

OSM. I felt you wished me.

HILD. You have understood—

I think, Osmunda, you have understood
My purposes.

[OSMUNDA *shrinks from her father.*]

You would be spared. I, too,
Have spared myself and weakly left unsaid,
When every omen beckoned me to speak,
This that I stammer now, though time and
place

Are most unapt. Not less than sacrilege
It seems to pry into my daughter's heart.
Now most I wish your mother were alive!—
Has Lucian spoken yet?

OSM. Of love, sir? No.

HILD. He loves you?

OSM. Sir, I cannot truly tell.

HILD. But you love him?

OSM. I love you and this land
The Lombards won from the false Roman.

HILD. Yes;
The Lombards first! I taught you that;
and great

It is to throne the nation we are of
Above ourselves, our lovers, kindred, friends.
But Lucian after Lombardy?—My thought
Is stamped upon the realm. King Aribert,
A brave and loyal nature, was to me
A sceptre and a sword wherewith I ruled
The Lombards, carved the figure of the state,
And lopped its enemies. The name of King
I cannot compass: I am hated, feared,
As all just rulers are. Wherefore, because
I deem myself the man most competent

To guide the destinies of Lombardy,
I would make Lucian king, a youth I love,
And sometimes have instructed in my craft,
My government and scheme of policy.

Although to neither have I told my hope,
(*with hesitation*) Still, he and you——

OSM. He has not spoken yet!

HILD. That may not be amiss. I will
believe

He loves you; and you him: but Lom-
bardy

O'ermasters every passion in your heart.

Were Urban to be chosen——

[OSMUNDA *shrinks further away from her
father.*]

If chance, that trips

The heels of purposes no skill can throw,

Should make this Urban king, could you——

The thing being possible—give him your
hand?

OSM. Give *him* my hand! Urban my
hand!—He asked
Me once to marry him——

HILD. (*eagerly*). Did he, indeed!
He loves you, then?

OSM. Oh no! I was, he said,
The sweetest lady in the land; and so
He *must* have me to wife. Insolent fop!
(*impulsively*) Oh, father, Lucian, since by
heart awoke,
Is king of me!

HILD. (*in a tone of menace, but quietly*).
If the great future
I have prepared for Lombardy requires
My daughter to be queen—and should the lot
Be cast for Urban, chief of those that thwart
My policy, who else can save the state?—
She would not stand upon a girlish plea
Of personal affection.

OSM. Save the state

By marrying Urban!

HILD. Just by marrying Urban.

OSM. (*in a low voice*). The lover of Saturnia!

HILD. As Urban's wife

My daughter could impart my influence,

Turn enmity to friendship, reinstall

The fulness of my power, should I be thrown

From my high office.

(*pleasantly*) But this is to forecast

A most unlikely order of events.

Our Lucian—let us meet him—shall be king ;

Osmunda, queen ; and I, old drudge of state,

Shall bear the blame of all their tyranny.

OSM. I pray you let me stay here by myself,

Until they come. I would consider this.

HILD. Consider most the weal of Lombardy. [*goes out.*]

OSM. The weal of Lombardy!—To be the wife

Of Urban ; him, whose presence, whose approach

Fills me with dark misgiving ; whom I hate—

If I hate any one. For Lombardy,

And for my father, could I bear such woe ?

Enter LUCIAN. He is about thirty years old ; handsome and in free moments graceful ; but bashful and awkward as a rule. He is in deep thought on his entrance.

OSM. Lucian !

LUC. Osmunda !

OSM. Why alone, my lord ?

LUC. To think ! to think ! I have been abroad since morn.

Am I the man who should be king ? The doubt

That hampers me admonishes my soul

Of most unkingly weakness. In myself

Unchosen and uncrowned, am I the king ?

OSM. (*with a certain degree of abandonment,
rebellling at her father's harsh control.*)

You are the king; and all your shifting
doubts

Are jewels in your native diadem
Of perfect truth,

LUC. That is your inmost thought?

OSM. The deep conviction of my very soul.

LUC. It helps! it helps! And yet I need
some sign,

Else at the fateful moment when the lords

Acclaim my coronation, I may cry,

"I am unworthy, for I doubt myself,"

And fling the crown away.

OSM. A sign, my lord?

LUC. From you. I have another torturing
doubt

Deeper than my vocation to the throne.

OSM. And I, my lord, can set that doubt
at rest?

LUC. You only.

OSM. It is dead and buried, then!

LUC. Buried and festering here! If you
can find

This wound, probe it, and draw the ragged
shaft

That rankles in my heart; it shall denote
That my unkingly doubt is fantasy.

OSM. You ask a miracle.

LUC. Can love perform

No wonders now?

OSM. (*faintly*). Love!

LUC. Speak! Uproot my doubt!

OSM. Oh, my lord Lucian! but I love you
well.

LUC. (*triumphantly*). Then am I king!

For since you love me well

It cannot be—it cannot surely be

That I am all unworthy of your love;

And having that shall I demur and dread

To wear the lesser glory of the crown?

OSM. Fear not the highest destiny!

LUC. For you!

It is for you! How could I offer her

Who gives me love less than the name of
queen?

OSM. (*suddenly recollecting her father's suggestion*). If you should not be chosen king!

LUC. Not king?

But it is sure! They never can elect

The ruffling Urban, petulant and vain,

The minion of his pleasures. Hildebrand,

Your father, *knows* that I am to be king.

OSM. If Urban *should* be chosen!

LUC. Never at all

Have I imagined that! It must not be!

I could not marry you, I could not live

Were Urban—Urban!—to be chosen king!

OSM. Behold I have revealed you to your-
self!

Before your proud ideal you are in doubt;
Against your rival, strong and resolute.

LUC. Against a thousand rivals!

[*takes OSMUNDA'S hand.*]

OSM. But, my lord,
My father and your friends are seeking you.

LUC. I had to be alone. And it was well
Because of this encounter.

OSM. Well—and ill.

[*LUCIAN releases her hand and stares
at her blankly. OSMUNDA offers him
a pomander that hangs at her girdle.*]

What is that—do you know?

LUC. (*handling the pomander.*) Why, what
it seems,

An exquisite pomander.

OSM. It is besides
A desperate comfort; poison, smelling sweet
As violets rooted by a sepulchre.

[*LUCIAN takes her hand with great
solicitude.*]

Ask nothing of me—nothing.

[goes out quickly.]

LUC. Still the doubt!

[goes out after OSMUNDA.]

Re-enter THRASIMUND, ADALBERT, LUDOLF,
VIOLANTE, *and the* Messenger.

THRA. Yes; but it must be opportunely
done.

[to the Messenger.] Your post is near my
lady. On the spur

Of her mute prompting this deliver straight.

[gives the letter to the Messenger.]

MESS. To whom shall I deliver it?

THRA. To one

That least expects it.

LUD. Do you leave him here?

Alone?

VIOL. The man is human at the best.

His patience and obedience need some help.

Let me remain while you rejoin your friends.

THRA. Sweetheart, it shall be so.—Footman, attend!

[*VIOLANTE sits on the coronation-stone, and the Messenger stands by her side.*]

Is she not infinitely adorable,
Immaculately beautiful and chaste?

[*THRASIMUND, ADALBERT, and
LUDOLF go out.*]

VIOL. Your mask of dulness fits you badly.

Quick,

Your hand! It's broad, but scarcely deep
enough.

Join them and make a chalice. Pocket that.

[*fills his hands with money.*]

Give me the letter.

[*The Messenger gives her the letter, which
she tears into small pieces and
scatters in a clump of chestnuts.*]

Now indeed, you look

A genuine fool!

*[takes a letter from her bosom and hands
it to the Messenger.]*

When the election's over

Give Urban this.

MESS. Is it not hazardous?

VIOL. Most hazardous; we trip the shift
ing sand

Between the devil and the deep sea. Hang
About my skirts. Be docile and you're made.

Enter the Rabble, crying "Lucian! Lucian!"

*After them Citizens, including PHILADEL-
PHUS and JUNIPERT. Then Lords and
Ladies, preceding LUCIAN, OSMUNDA,
HILDEBRAND, THRASIMUND, VIOLANTE,
LUDOLF, ADALBERT, ALMERIC, and
ULRIC, who stand on the left. These are
followed by a body of Soldiers, who march
the Citizens and the Rabble to the back of*

the stage and guard a passage from the right to the coronation-stone.

VIOLANTE *and the Messenger have come down to the front on the right.*

HILD. (*whispering*). The matter of the letter, Thrasimund?

THRA. (*whispering*). Placed in the safest hands in Lombardy.

My wife shall at a passage in my speech,
Discharge the courier with his tell-tale news
At Urban's head.

HILD. (*to himself*). Old fool! His wife?
His bosom-enemy! I'll set a watch.

[*whispers to LUDOLF, who crosses and stands beside Messenger.*]

Enter the BISHOP OF PAVIA, attended by Acolytes swinging censers, a Priest carrying the Iron Crown on a cushion, and

Servants with a cloth of gold which they fling over the coronation-stone.

The BISHOP stands on the right of the knoll, Acolytes on one hand, and the Priest on the other.

ADAL. *(looking out right).*

He loiters, talking idly with his friends.

LUD. His fate is on the anvil and he laughs.

THRA. Begin, my lord, the business of the hour.

BISH. Although this Urban be unmannerly,
Our conduct must become us.

Enter URBAN, with PASQUAL on his right; a little behind him five other Lords and a Falconer with hawks.

URBAN is about twenty-five, with yellow curls hanging to his shoulders. His moustache is trimmed to give him a juvenile

appearance. He has a hooded hawk on his gauntleted left hand, and carries a hawking-pole in his right. He is dressed in a richly ornamented hawking-costume. His presence makes the air electric; all are wondering what he will do, what he will say.

PASQUAL is about URBAN'S age; dark-haired; devoted to URBAN.

On the entrance of URBAN, LUCIAN shrinks behind OSMUNDA.

URB. Lucian! Where—

Where is my princely rival?

[OSMUNDA pushes LUCIAN forward.

URBAN throws his hawking-pole to PASQUAL, and crossing quickly to LUCIAN takes his hand.]

Good-day, my lord!

(radiantly) Whether I win or lose, my pride
is throned

As high as my desire because of this:—
I was found worthy to contest with you
The iron crown of Lombardy.

LUC. (*stiffly*). My lord,
I thank you.

URB. I have often thought it strange
We meet so seldom.

LUC. I frequent the past
More than the dazzling tumult of the hour.

URB. Where silence reigns and thought
may wander free!

I love the past; but there no deeds are done;
And I would act. Deeds, deeds, my lord!

LUC. And thoughts.

URB. It is a deed to think as I intend.
To dream, to mope in cloisters with a book;
To argue with one's self—an easy fight,
The practised dexter brandishing a sword
Against the awkward dagger of the left . . .

[*interrupting himself, as his gesture
brings his hawk to mind.*]

My merlin with the russet-velvet wing,
The birds of heaven shall fall beneath your
feet! . . .

I say, to think in solitude at home
Is not to think but to be lunatic.
Pale-hearted is the thought that dare not be
As kindred to its deed as sound and light
When heaven is masked and wields the
thunderbolt.

LUC. One must command the world to
think that way.

URB. Assuredly ; scarce one man in an age
Can think his meaning out.

LUC. You force the word.

URB. Words are my toys. I swear all
other thought
Than that which works in things, not signs ;
and moves

Abreast with action to the happy close
Is like a headless spear, a wooden sword.

BISH. My lord Urban, you have delayed
the act

For which we are met ; further, it fits you ill
Upon this solemn business to appear
With hawk on fist.

THRA. A merlin too, we note—
The imperial bird.

URB. (*to THRASIMUND*). It is your rightful
wish

That I should lose the election ; if I do,
Would you withhold such pure oblivion
Of my defeat as may immediately
Befriend me, when I watch my merlin, belled
With Milan silver, climb the tingling air?

[*gives his hawk to the Falconer.*]

HILD. My lord, your gaiety would gild
the world

Were daylight done. Our Lucian here is set
To graver music ; not a wink of sleep
Had he all night, revolving desperately

The issue of to-day.

URB. And did I rest?

A watch devout of sleepless nightingales
Attended in my garden where I paced
Till morn; above the meadows now the larks
Enwreath the sky with sound; but neither
night

Nor day, nor nature's timely melody
Could tune my mind to any constant mood.
Here only, at the moment of my fate,
My soul at last reposes, and I know,
Howe'er it ends, I shall be satisfied.—
Come, my lord bishop, let the vote be cast.

THRA. One word. You see, and many,
I believe,

Proscribe in silence Urban's arrogance;
Though some, corrupted by the spell, so-
called,

Of his reputed charm, excuse, nay praise,
That wanton style, which in another, all

Would censure and chastise. Beneath this trick,
This brilliant ambush of indifferent pride,
There lurks, believe me, a tyrannic soul.

LUD. (*whispering*). Now is your time.

MESS. Not yet!

VIOL. (*whispering*). Leave him alone!

VOICES. Silence there ; silence !

THRA. It is known, at last,
That Urban is in league with traitors.

LUD. Back!

[*thrusting the Messenger forward
while seeming to restrain him.*]

Come back! He will not be withheld. He
bears,

He says, post-haste, a letter from Ravenna.

THRA. A letter from Ravenna, that forcing-
house

Of enmity to Lombard rule! For whom?

LUD. For Urban.

ADAL. In the very nick of time!

URB. The devil's children have the devil's luck.

Give me this letter that arrives so pat.

[takes the letter.]

I know the writing.

*[fans himself with the letter.—*VIOLANTE
looks imploringly at URBAN, but his
glance never turns her way.]

THRA. It is hot, my lord ;
And will be warmer, presently, for you.—
Nobles and men of Lombardy, our king
Has ever been the servant of his people,
Obedient to the laws. If you elect
This traitorous lord, you choose a malcontent
Whose aim will be to overturn the state,
To rule as despot and enslave us all.

BISH. Your accusation would be weightier
Did you advance some proof.

THRA. What further proof
Is needed than the message now received?

URB. This is a private letter—from a friend.

THRA. Will you permit the letter to be
read?

URB. If I refuse?

THRA. Your treason is confessed.

VOICES. The letter! Read the letter!

URB. Very well.

But first, be warned. A lifelong memory
Of what you now demand will gnaw your heart
With exquisite regret.

THRA. My heart? For shame!

A paltry ruse to turn the tables! Read!
If that is not of treasonable mark,
Some outlaw's message, I'll unpack my brains
To feed a housewife's poultry. Me, regret!

URB. (*with a glance of compassion*). The
seal is yet unbroken.

THRA. Break it now.

BISH. Give me the letter. Should the
charge be true,

Nothing were simpler than to read a note
Of invitation or a friendly wish,
And leave our doubt silenced but unresolved.

[VIOLANTE *with a smothered exclamation*
hurries out.]

THRA. A pregnant counsel!

URB. Read it then, my lord.

[*gives the letter to the* BISHOP.]

A moment! Do *you* fear to find my name
Blighted for ever?

BISH. No; some strange abuse
Is here at work.

THRA. Some strange abuse, indeed!

URB. It may be so.

BISH. (*having opened the letter and glanced at*
the signature). I am sorry, Thrasimund.

This comes from Violante.

[*All look towards the place where VIO-*
LANTE had been standing, and many
nod their heads knowingly.]

THRA. What!

VOICES. Read! Read!

BISH. (*reading.*) "May it please your majesty. My hope has made you king already, my most dear Urban, and if now you wear the crown you owe it to me. This letter is in place of one which, by my husband's arrangement, should have lost you the kingship. Oh, my lord, your constant scorn maddens me! For this service, what reward?—VIOLANTE."

THRA. Give it me!

[*The BISHOP gives THRASIMUND the letter.*]

How is this? Where is she? Where!

ALM. Gone home to hang herself!

THRA. I can explain——

ULR. Explain a byeword old as time itself!

Upon your face the truth is wrinkled deep.

THRA. I mean to say——

HILD. Mean silence, and go home.

[THRASIMUND, *becoming more and more confused, half stumbles, and is half pushed from one to the other of several lords, who address him in turn.*]

1ST L. Some men, if marriages be made
in heaven,

Have few friends there.

2ND L. This was a vulgar trick!

3RD L. The fox that hastens forth to buy
a knife

Lands often in the furrier's.

4TH L. You trudge home shorn.

5TH L. And stuck with proverbs like an
archer's mark.

[THRASIMUND *is about to fall, when*
URBAN *supports him and leads him*
out, returning immediately.]

VOICE (*from the rabble*). Hey! Keep
your brains for your *own* poultry-yard!

6TH L. I vote for Urban now!

OTHER LORDS. And I, and I.

BISH. The memory of this disgrace must
fret

High hearts the longest; but the tongues of all
Who love the state will leave the thing un-
touched

Henceforth for ever, garbage for gossipers.—
By our old wont we are assembled here
To choose a king. Two names are offered
you :

Urban and Lucian. I commend them both.
Who vote for Lucian?

LUCIAN'S PARTY (*with drawn swords in
air*). Lucian!

[LUCIAN *half draws his sword and
drives it back into the scabbard
disdainfully.*]

BISH. Now, for Urban?

URBAN'S PARTY (*an evident majority, with drawn swords in air*). Urban!

[URBAN, *having no sword, takes one before he has time to resheath it from a supporter of LUCIAN's, and is the first to vote for himself.*]

LORDS, LADIES, CITIZENS. Urban!

RABBLE. Urban, king of the Lombards!

BISH. (*to LUCIAN*). Do you demand a poll? It is your right.

LUC. I thank you. It is needless now, my lord.

(*stiffly, nerving himself to say it; to URBAN.*)

The crown is yours, I am your majesty's:
Command my loyalty.

URB. Oh, noble Lombard!

To-night, I hope to welcome you, my
guest,

Most honoured, most illustrious.

LUC. Pardon me ;

I wish to be alone.

[*moves towards OSMUNDA, then turns away and goes out hastily. OSMUNDA, deeply distressed, is about to follow LUCIAN, but HILDEBRAND withholds her.*]

PHIL. (*bursts through the guard and falls at URBAN'S feet*). A boon ! a boon !

URB. What suitor have we here ?

PHIL. Your majesty,

I am, so please you, a philosopher.

URB. And what is that ?

PHIL. A thinker, who adopts

His proper attitude.

URB. Adopt another.

Rise and define yourself.

PHIL. (*rises*). I do not ask

That men should see themselves as others do.

I am concerned that I myself should see

*carried out
her plan
with
David*

My fellow-creatures as they see themselves.

URB. A most magnanimous philosophy!
How do you like it, Pasqual?

PASQ. I should hold
Such conscious magnanimity suspect.

URB. A thing put on? Good; magnanimity
Can never be acquired, and nothing shows
More feeble than its affectation.

PHIL. True;
Yet hear me out. Magnanimous I am;
But like the meanest and the greatest here,
Envy of your great fortune sears my soul.

URB. Envy of me!

PHIL. As long as life shall last!
Nothing to me is of significance
Between your station and nonentity.
And since I cannot be the king alone
Upon the apex of the pyramid,
Make me the headsman to frequent its base,

Expelled and banned, a being less than nought.

URB. The headsman?

PHIL. Yes. My predecessor died
Upon the same day as king Aribert.

URB. How does this chime with your pro-
fessed good-will?

PHIL. In tune! A headsman there must
always be——

URB. Must there indeed! I am the foe
of "must"

In things that men control. If need arise
I will appoint a headsman, not before.

PHIL. Three men await the axe, your
majesty.

URB. They shall be pardoned, then, to
grace this day.

Begone, sir; you have dimmed a burnished
hour,

And like a death's-head o'er my shoulder
peered,

Forecasting woe.

[PHILADELPHUS *is thrust back among
the Rabble.*]

PHIL. I shall be headsmen yet!

JUNI. You feel that? In *my* ears a singing keeps,

"You, too, shall serve the great ones of the earth."

BISH. (*laying his hand on the crown*). My lord, and king elect——

URB. Not yet.

(*to HILDEBRAND.*) I wish,
Before the hallowed crown of Lombardy
Convinces me of kingship, to atone
The factions, that the state itself
And my dominion may be based and reared
On one united heart and will.

HILD. I moved
The world against you, jealous of my right
As a free Lombard ; but since fate decides

For you, I bury in the past all doubt,
Antipathy, and malice, there to die
And moulder into dust—if you prove true
To Lombardy, and the impartial rule
Of law-abiding kings.

URB. This for yourself,
And those who follow you of every rank?

HILD. I undertake for all.

LORDS *and* CITIZENS. For all!

RABBLE. For all!

URB. And now, my lord, I beg your
daughter's hand
As sign and seal of this new amity.

[*All are well pleased.*]

PASQ. A perfect match! It would delight
the world.

HILD. Proudly I welcome it! But she
is here,
A free maid, and must answer for herself.

[*fixing his eyes on OSMUNDA, he leads
her to URBAN.*]

URB. (*loftily, but sweetly enough*). Will you
be mine, most high, most beautiful?
In sight of men, beneath the eye of heaven,
As monarchs may, I woo; but for myself,
Lady, I woo you not; nor yet as king:
I woo you in the name of Lombardy,
Because you are most worthy to be queen.

OSM. (*looks to her father, whose eyes are fixed
on her; then quickly to URBAN*). Not worthy
—oh, not worthy! but in the name
Of Lombardy, and to unite the state,
I think, my lord, I could bestow my hand.

[URBAN *kisses* OSMUNDA'S *right hand*;
HILDEBRAND *presses* her *left*.
OSMUNDA *sighs heavily, and cannot
conceal her distress.*]

VOICE (*high and clear at the back of the
stage*). Saturnia!

VOICE (*deep and strong at the back*). Ay,
ay! Saturnia!

URB. (*faintly*). Who speaks?

VOICE (*like an echo*). Saturnia!

[OSMUNDA *shrinks away*. HILDEBRAND
is much dismayed. URBAN *looks with*
menacing glance at various lords whom
he seems to suspect.]

BISH. These airy calls

Assail your conscience, king elect. The world
Has watched your amour with the Roman slave
Who rules your heart ; the market-haunters jest
Of Urban and Saturnia ; lovers brood
And hatch a legend for them. Pride of life,
Most rank, most salient, speak to *me* of power
And a great nature idling by the way.
Is it not so ? The king will leave behind
The sins of manhood ?

URB. Else were he no king !

Of manhood's sins and of its virtues too,
Outworn apparel, kings divest themselves.
Saturnia, I renounce.

HILD. A high resolve!

ADAL. And sudden!

PASQ. Not so sudden, as I know.

Three days ago, expecting to be king,
He left Saturnia.

VOICE. Saturnia!

[URBAN *having doffed his hat, has approached the BISHOP for the coronation, but starts and turns at the word "SATURNIA."* Many voices join in the cry; it is first taken up by the Rabble, then by the Lords and Citizens.]

Enter SATURNIA. She is in her twenty-first year, but looks older. Her face is full; the features large, and in repose somewhat harsh; the eyes are dark grey, gentle in expression, and with the depth and significance of youth and passion. Her dark brown hair hangs to her waist. Her voice is deep and sweet.

She wears a white robe girt with a belt of gold.

SATURNIA goes at once to URBAN, heeding none of the bystanders, who are intensely interested.

SAT. The terror of the night has driven me here.

URB. You should have stayed at home.

SAT. At home !

Why did my home forsake me silently
For three long suns and moons ?

URB. You shall be told ;
But leave me now.

SAT. I dare not leave you now,
Lest I should never see your face again.

URB. Some idle fancy has distressed you.

SAT. No !
Three times I dreamt you were about to die.
A frightened woman clung to you, her arms

Entwined in such a lover's knot as this.

[clasps her arms about URBAN'S neck.]

She cried out, "Mercy ! mercy !"

[withdraws her arms from URBAN'S neck.]

Desperately

I strained my sight, and watched for her
to turn ;

But still her countenance was hidden.

URB. Pooh !

A nursery tale of second-sight !

[turns from SATURNIA to PASQUAL.]

SAT. *(laying her hand on URBAN'S arm).*

Attend ! *[URBAN faces SATURNIA.]*

Trailing his burnished axe that on the floor
Rasped as he strode, the headsman came
behind,

And touched your shoulder. I could see his
eyes

Like blood-stained jewels sparkling in his
mask.

And there they stood, these three ; more
visible

Than all this company, and so assigned
To terror and the sundering of love,
That though the way had been inlaid with fire,
I should have trod a passage to my lord
To reassure my heart.

URB. (*pointing to the crown*). A headsman
waits

Behind me ; but the iron which he wields
Augments the stature, sanctifies the life
Of him on whom it falls. You find me well,
And at the summit of my hopes.

(*placing SATURNIA'S hand in PASQUAL'S*). Con-
duct

This lady home.

SAT. No ! No !—Then you are king !

[*She withdraws her hand from PASQUAL,
and looks about her with bent brows,
thinking it out.*]

The meaning of my dream? Oh! It was *I*
That hung about your neck! The iron crown
Is the broad axe to cut you off from me!
But you will never leave me? Never?
Never?

HILD. Drag her away!

BISH. Let not this evil thing
Disturb the sweetness of our new accord.

[*Two Soldiers lay hands on SATURNIA.*]

SAT. Oh!

[*twists herself out of the Soldiers' hands.*]

I will go alone—if *he* commands.

URB. Go!

SAT. (*starts; shudders; then mournfully*).

Go! Once it was “come,” and always
“come.”

(*whispering in URBAN'S ear*). One word—one
secret word; then I will go.

[*URBAN and SATURNIA come down to
the front.*]

Dear love, I understand. Before the world
You must deny me ; and chastise me too
With bitterness and anger, since I came
Uncalled, unwelcome, urged by foolish fears.
But afterwards ; to-night——

URB. (*withdraws from SATURNIA. Aloud*).

No ; not to-night ;
Nor any night. I dare not. *Here* we part.
The house you have, and half my private
wealth,
I give you that a soul so exquisite
May live delightfully ; thus I enshrine
My past, endow my youth, and bury love,
Even at its clustered prime and fragrant
strength,
Illustrious in a living tomb, engraved
With happy memories for epitaph.

SAT. The epitaph of love ? Our love ?

No ; no !

I cannot live without you !

URB. Jealousy

And every hatefulnes would gnaw your life
After to-day's event. I honour love,
And the sweet spirit of the universe ;
I honour you, myself, and the true hearts
That have exalted me to monarchy,
By ending our communion in its flower.

SAT. But you will see me once alone, my
lord !

URB. Not once ! I am the king of Lom-
bardy. [*turns his back on SATURNIA.*]
Above all love and hate, and good and ill,
The monarch, like the sun, on high designs
With perfect will intent, moves in his sphere
Dispensing light, alone. He cherishes
Nothing but his dominion. Saturnia,
Whom more than all the world I loved, I
tear
For ever from my heart.

[*A general murmur of admiration.*]

SAT. (*seems about to fall; rejects the aid of
a Soldier and goes out muttering*). He
dare not come,

He said. I have his love. I hold him yet.

[URBAN *takes OSMUNDA'S hand and
leads her to the coronation-stone,
on which he seats her. Then he
lifts the crown from the cushion
and crowns himself.*]

Fate has bestowed it on me. Woe to him
That touches it! I, who shall rule, adore
This envied land, in purple vintages
And golden harvests clad; adorned and
veiled

With braided rivers; thickly studded o'er
With hearths that glow; with famous cities
zoned

From sea to sea, from Alp to Apennine.
I am become this land, this Lombardy;
Its azure waters seem to me my blood;

Its snowy crests my crown ; and in my heart
The Lombards have their home—the quick,
the dead,
The ancient story and the flying days
We'll fill with noble deeds.

ALL. Long live the king !

A YEAR ELAPSES

ACT II

ELIXIR VITÆ

SCENE.—*The hall of the Royal Palace, Pavia.*

A large door at the back leads to the city. A similar door on the right opens on the Council-room. On the left are the entrances to the private apartments. At the back of the hall on the left is a curtained-off recess. Windows at the back look on a garden terrace, behind which in the distance the city appears. Tapestries and trophies of arms hang on the walls.

Near the front on the left a table with several chairs. On the table a chess-board

and men ; a wine-jar, and goblets of gold and crystal.

It is late in the afternoon when the act begins. The sun, setting behind the city, has disappeared by the end of the act ; and the new moon, deeply coloured by the sunset, rises just above the sun.

When the curtain rises ALMERIC and ULRIC are discovered playing chess ; and THRASIMUND entering from the city in the dress of a pilgrim.

THRASIMUND has aged greatly ; stoops ; walks with a shuffling gait ; smiles often ; his voice quavers ; he is on the verge of dotage.

ULR. A pilgrim !

ALM. Check. [ULRIC studies the game.]

THRA. I wish to see the king.

ALM. The king receives all comers, scallop-shell.

But you must wait a while ; the council sits.

ULR. That passed pawn spoiled my game.

I give it up,—

What news from Jericho and Istambul ?

[ALMERIC *and* ULRIC *rise from the*
table, and saunter towards THRASI-
MUND.]

ALM. Come, we are idle here. Embroider
time

With marvels for us. Did you see the eale
Whose horns revolve like axle-fitted scythes ;
Satyrs and centaurs ; sphinxes ; pigmies ; folk
That never die, silent and adder-fed ?

ULR. And how did you escape the leucro-
cotta,

His cavern mouth, his single jaw-wide tooth,
His human voice that cheats the vagabond ?
Or that heroic beast the antelope,
Who saws down trees and conquers regiments
With serried horns, woodman and warrior too ?

THRA. (*takes off his hat, and peers at them*).

Young Almeric, and—Ulric!

ALM. and ULR. Thrasimund!

ALM. Your garb, your absence, your reported death

Deceived us both.

ULR. Where have you travelled, sojourned, Slept and fed, risked life and limb, this year past?

THRA. Back from Jerusalem and many a shrine

I come to crave the mercy of the king.

Consider: I have pardoned Violante.

ALM. Why, then, indeed, the king may pardon you!

THRA. I found her in seclusion, where she wore

A novice's attire. She let me see

The scourge she used. Time lapses; fancy shifts;

Impressions wither ; we are reconciled.

ALM. A ballad-ending ! Very wisely done !

THRA. You think the king will see me ?

ALM. Certainly.

THRA. I wear my pilgrim's garb to fetch
his fancy.

ALM. Good !

THRA. If humility and penance fail,
I have a secret to persuade his grace.

ALM. A jewel ?

THRA. No ; an odd discovery.
The Pyramid of Life I call the thing,
Or the Coeval Angle.

ALM. What is that ?

[THRASIMUND takes a burnished triangular shield from a trophy, and erects it, broad end down, on the table. ULRIC leans against the wall watching THRASIMUND with an amused smile. ALMERIC attends gravely.]

THRA. Here is the symbol of the life of
man. [*touching one point of the base.*]

Birth. . . . Let me see now.

[*silently measures off four equal spaces
on either side of the shield.*]

Yes ; this point is birth.

[*striking the shield at regular intervals
one side after the other.*]

The tenth, the twentieth, thirtieth, fortieth,
year.

The apex of the pyramid divides

The fortieth from the fiftieth, you observe.

Then fifty files with thirty ; sixty—twenty ;

And seventy equals ten ; while fourscore
meets

The point opposing birth. And now you
know

The Pyramid of Life. [*lays down the shield.*]

ALM. By this you mean ?

THRA. The second half of life is sweeter far

Than earlier years.

[re-erects the shield and illustrates.]

In climbing up the hill

Your back is to the world ; in coming down

You take it leisurely and overlook

A wide horizon. There is no such thing

As old age, therefore.

ALM. No !

THRA. That is the soul

Of my discovery. Look here, again.

Eighty to seventy ; one to ten : you see—

The childhoods, first and second. Watch me
well.

Next : sixty—twenty ; fifty—thirty : youth

And early manhood, first and second still.

Fifty. . . . There should be properly a plain

From thirty on to fifty ; a plateau,

The spacious, fertile, double prime of life.

Where is old age ? I cannot find its place :

Old age is jostled from the Pyramid ;

The angle's sides are, as it were, coeval ;
There is not, never was, and cannot be
The living phantom men have called old age.

ALM. The true Elixir Vitæ known at
last !

THRA. Elixir Vitæ ? Ah, if that were
found !

ALM. To what end since senility is nought.

THRA. But there is death ! Aha, boys !
Death chops in.

[restores the shield to its place on the wall.]

Still my Coeval Angle pleases you.

You see the solace of it ; and you think

It may amuse the king ? Experience proves

That quaint originalities like this

Avail with potentates, while solemn views

Protract the musty tedium of life.

ALM. Courtly discrimination !

THRA. Tell me, now :

How does my sorry reputation do ?

Has my misfortune on the election day
Worn to a myth?

ALM. No; it is talked of still.

THRA. I'll live it down. By heaven, I'll
live it down!

ALM. Your reputation will be ruined then.
Even for the thing you mourn your name is now
The most renowned in Lombardy.

THRA. My name!

ALM. As patriot and prophet. Words of
yours

Ignite their hearts wherever men discuss:—

“In Urban you elect a malcontent,
Whose aim will be to overturn the state,
To rule as despot, and enslave us all.”

It was a true prediction. In himself
Urban has centred all authority,
Defiantly and frankly, like a king!

THRA. But Ludolf, Adalbert, and Hilde-
brand?

ALM. Dismissed, impoverished, and mad
with hate.

THRA. And you are for the king?

ALM. Yes; king's men both.

THRA. Is the king's party strong?

ALM. The king is strong.

THRA. And popular?

ALM. Adored by all his friends.

THRA. Ay, but unpopular, you mean to say?

ALM. He tithes the very blades of grass.

THRA. For what? an army?

ALM. Yes.

THRA. Whom will he fight?

ALM. That we may know to-day.

THRA. The world goes on!

How does he manage, wanting Hildebrand,

A warrior of a thousand?

ALM. Garda leads.

THRA. The rebel! Then the world is up-
side down!

And Lucian heads the opposition now?

ALM. No; Hildebrand. Self-exiled on the
day

Osmunda married Urban, Lucian eats
His heart out in Ravenna.

THRA. Urban's wife,
Daughter to Hildebrand, Urban's enemy!
A diplomat may thrive!—An heir?

ALM. An heiress.
Three weeks ago the queen was brought to
bed.

THRA. Well; well.—And so they talk of
me.

ALM. Oh yes!
Your name's a watchword.

[ULRIC *beckons to* ALMERIC, *and they*
talk apart.]

THRA. (*to himself*). To abase myself
Might prove a wanton waste of self-respect
Since fame has so exalted me. This garb

Misfits a popular leader. With the king
I must be dignified.—Good-day, young men.
My purpose changes; I shall wash away
The stains of travel ere I come to court.

[*about to go.*]

ULR. (*detaining* THRASIMUND). A mo-
ment! How if we could supplement
Your famous angle with the Elixir Vitæ!

THRA. Elixir Vitæ! My old mouth
waters at it!

In Mesopotamia there lived a man
Who found it out; but he by some strange
chance

Had passed away before I reached his town.

ULR. Mesopotamia calls for no regret.
We have it here in Pavia.

THRA. The Elixir!

ULR. I can procure a draught of the Elixir.

THRA. My hearing sometimes falters.
What?

ULR. I say

I can procure a draught of the Elixir.

THRA. Ha, ha! Jocose young man!—

Have you it here?

ULR. It shall be at your service when
you choose.

THRA. I am not the man I was. Some-
thing played snap

Inside my skull when Violante's letter
Was read before the world. I cannot now,
As with my former promptitude, detect
Whether your grave demeanour cloaks a jest
Or bares an honest purpose.

ULR. Oh, the proof
Of puddings and elixirs is the same!

THRA. Why, then I will be credulous till
the proof!
Procure the draught. The experiment at
least

May stir my pulse.—I live across the way.

Expect me back as soon as I demit
My chrysalis.

*[opens his pilgrim's gown and shows a
courtier's dress beneath as he goes
out.]*

ALM. He thinks, to change old age,
You turn it like a mantle inside out.

ULR. As vapid truths revive by paradox.

ALM. How will you compass this?

ULR. My scheme matures.

[Enter PHILADELPHUS from the city.]

The very broker that the business wants!

PHIL. Are there no heads too hot yet for
their shoulders?

No executioner required to-night?

ULR. The old errand still! You never
seem to tire.

PHIL. I haunt the palace like an evil
genius.

ULR. And prosecute your canvas every
day?

PHIL. Save holidays and Sundays every
day

Since Urban's coronation! I become
An institution: legend marks me out.
I revel in a more redoubted name,
As indefatigable candidate
For the unholy ultimate career
Of headsmanship, than if I had cut off
Six traitors every week.

ULR. The king remits
The final doom.

ALM. As despot he does well.
His prisons are a nursery of arms;
Out of the criminal he hews the soldier:
So trims a ragged edge.

ULR. The murderer
Can slaughter or be slaughtered, one would
think,

Like any other ; and the thief may shine
When plunder is the order of the day.

PHIL. I bide my time. Beside the
armoury,
In a dark cupboard that the cobwebs drape,
The axe, the block, the headsman's dress await
me.

ULR. How would you care to play a part
meanwhile—
Turn a dishonest penny by the hire
Of your loquacity?

PHIL. I never look
At two sides of a coin ; for I can make
The false go farther than most men the
true—

Or I were no philosopher!

ULR. You rogue!
Come after me. You are to personate
A wizard, and exhibit life's elixir.

PHIL. I will exhibit any nostrum, pill,

Or panacea men insist upon ;
And I can personate any one you like,
Being a compendium of humanity.

[ULRIC and PHILADELPHUS leave the
hall by a private door.]

Enter from the Council-room a number of Lords.
They go out at the back in twos and threes,
talking as they go.

1ST L. He drills us like a drift of dunces ;
talks

Engaging generalities ; and laughs
Behind our backs.

2ND L. We have a king, my lord ;
We have a king !

3RD L. Who's for the wars, then, who ?

4TH L. I follow still the crowd.

3RD L. Wise man.

4TH L. I've held
Before to-day a candle to the devil.

5TH L. I wish it was this time next year,
I do!

6TH L. A coward's wish! Say rather, well
begun!

5TH L. You'll find a puddle in the
smoothest road.

6TH L. Fear you no puddles. Little wit
will serve;

Women and fortune worship fools, you know.

[*Laughter and all out.*]

*Enter from the Council-room URBAN, reading
a paper. After him PASQUAL and the
DUKE OF GARDA. ALMERIC salutes and
goes out.*

PASQ. Will you not give me leave to
speak my mind?

URB. Why so demure? I ask for nothing
else.

You never found your friend intolerant.

GAR. Let me speak mine. The word is,
up and march!

I know the Æmilian way's a Roman road,
And excellent travelling too; nevertheless
His majesty may mean Ravenna-wards.
But if his purpose were the end of the earth
And headlong to the abyss, I am the man
To lead his army on!

URB. Without such men
Kings were impossible.

GAR. And wanting kings
Such men as I are ineffectual.

URB. (*giving GARDA the paper.*) All is set
down. Good speed. Until to-morrow.

[GARDA *goes out.*]

Now, Pasqual, the perplexed, what malady
Afflicts your fancy? [*sits at the table.*]

PASQ. *You* are my disease.
Ambition like a robe of flame has girt
You, shutting out the wholesome world; and I

Am sick to think my comrade and my king
May blaze to ashes in his own desire.

URB. That is the end of all men, whether
they be
Of wood or adamant; for in themselves
Resides the fire that burns them at the stake
Appointed—avarice, ambition, love.

PASQ. But you admit no counsel, share
your thought
With no man.

URB. Ah! jealous of my design!
Well; you shall know it first, I swear, old
friend.

PASQ. Are you not somewhat selfish with
your friend?

URB. Selfish? Yes! When I weary of
myself
And take no joy in Urban, then the world
Has ceased to be! Accept me, for I like
you;

But never hope that you shall understand
Me, or the meanest being that can think.
And love yourself! Oh, learn to love your-
self!

Consider how the silent sun is rapt
In self-devotion! All things work for good
To them that love themselves.—How shall we
spend
Our happiness till supper-time?

[*picks up a chessman.*]

PASQ. Oh no!

You always win.

*Re-enter ULRIC and PHILADELPHUS. PHILA-
DELPHUS wears a long gown, and is dis-
guised in long grey beard and hair. He
carries a bag.*

URB. Ulric, what masker's this?
He has purloined, it seems, the very gait
Of Philadelphus.

ULR. He, your majesty!

He personates an Æthiopian mage,
And means to doctor Thrasimund with drops
Of the Elixir Vitæ.

URB. Thrasimund!

ULR. Returned to-day, a dotard from the
East,

Affecting youth offensively; our aim,
To make him entertaining, if we may.

URB. Pursue it. I shall watch.

PHIL. Your majesty
Detected my disguise; but notwithstanding,
I think it could beguile a shrewder wit
Than his whose vanity we'll titivate.

URB. Try Almeric. He waits without.

[ULRIC *goes to the door at the back and
beckons* ALMERIC.]

PHIL. (*goes up stage humming*).

I am the alchemist you wot of;
I couple the antipodes;

My skill is vaster and more thought of
Than Hermes Trismegistus's.

[stands at the back.]

ULR. He comes.

Re-enter ALMERIC.

URB. Have you seen Thrasimund?

ALM. Yes, your majesty.

URB. What word of Violante?

ALM. Reconciled.

URB. Better and better!

*[PHILADELPHUS comes down stage slowly,
describing a pentacle in the air to the
right.]*

Michael of Pavia!

Whom have we here?

ALM. He scribbles in the air.

Some fortune-teller, some eccentric cheat.

*[PHILADELPHUS describes a pentacle in
the air to the left.]*

Expert in gesture, his aërial script
Prefigures—mendicancy.

PHIL. (*describing a pentacle in the air in front*). Watch me score

The mystic pentacle that purges space.

ALM. I had forgotten! Philadelphus!
Well!

PHIL. "I am the alchemist you wot of."

ULR. Hush!—Thrasimund!

ALM. Your tackle's ready?

PHIL. (*opens the bag*). See,
Every appliance for renewing youth!

Re-enter THRASIMUND, *dressed in an extravagantly youthful style.*

URB. Welcome, my lord.

THRA. Your majesty! Have I
Your gracious pardon?

URB. All the past is dead.

THRA. Then am I young already.

URB. True ;

But not so young as you will shortly be.

We are prepared, my lord. Greet the renowned

Egyptian necromancer—what's his name?—

Amen Psammeticus, in exile here

By malice of incompetent rivalry.

THRA. You know of my experiment, it seems.

URB. I know, approve, admire.

THRA. There's no such thing

As old age, I maintain ; yet bones grow stiff ;

Brains, tender ; pulses domptable.

URB. Old age

Is doubtless a satirical report

Which inexperience foists upon mankind.

Nevertheless it may not be amiss

That magic should avert such accidents

As shedding of the lovelocks and the teeth,

And pale dilution of the sober blood ;
For all these things give plausibility
To slanders put about by wanton youth.

PASQ. It is a shameful thing for age to eke
The filthy dregs of stale incontinence.

URB. Yes ; but it's bravery in the breed
of men
That all should want to live their lives again.

THRA. Ah, to be young and fresh, your
majesty,
With all one's own experience engraved
Upon a fertile brain and thumping heart !

URB. Or even without one's own experience.
Saint
And sinner willingly would be once more
Just what they have been ; in our children too
We happily recur to the end of time.

PHIL. (*has filled a crystal goblet with wine
and holds a phial in his hand*). Now, all
is ready.

URB. Let me see the Elixir.

*[takes the phial from PHILADELPHUS,
and walks up stage with it, looking
at it against the light. PHILADEL-
PHUS follows him, and they talk in
whispers.]*

What action on the wine?

PHIL. 'Twill turn it blue.

URB. On him?

PHIL. He'll sleep like twenty for a space.

[They return to THRASIMUND.]

URB. These are the last drops of the
Elixir Vitæ

Remaining on the earth : never again

Will any haggard alchemist compound

Potable life ; the secret of it died

With the discoverer. What cause, what
whim

Ordains this dew of youth for you, ask
not.

Give thanks, and drink.

[PHILADELPHUS *holds the goblet, and*
URBAN *empties the phial into it.*
The wine immediately becomes blue.
THRASIMUND *is about to take it,*
but URBAN snatches it away.]

URB. Cerulean cordial!

If I were certain that this crystal held
A freehold tenure of time with energy
Instant and inexhaustible!

THRA. (*clasping and unclasping his hands*).
My liege,

You will not surely take it from me now!

URB. (*ignoring THRASIMUND*). Never to
know decay of appetite——

THRA. Ah!

URB. The ineffectual nerves, the crumbling
thought,
The feeble pulses of senility!

THRA. Ay!

URB. But to be tensely strung and give
response
Full-souled to every pang of pleasure and
pain ;
To be impassioned always and not to die !

THRA. You said it was ordained by fate
for me !

URB. (*gives the goblet to THRASIMUND, who
gulps the contents*). For you ! Drink to
the dregs, credulity !

THRA. (*nauseates the draught, and looks rue-
fully from one to the other*). This is a
draught of death ! You have poisoned me !

[*He becomes unconscious. ULRIC and
ALMERIC place him in a chair, and
PHILADELPHUS operates immediately,
ULRIC and ALMERIC handing him
from the bag, scissors, razor, soap,
rouge, and everything necessary for
the change.*]

PASQ. How pitiful! And how can you
permit

Your leisure so invidious a sport?

URB. Why, this is nothing! When Medea
turned

An old man young again she chopped him
up,

And boiled him in a caldron for a week.

PASQ. Pardon my thinking it is idly
done:

You will regret it.

URB. Never, friend of mine,
Even if it were iniquity. Regrets
Of all remorseful people in the world,
What are they when the morning comes
again,

And every heart-beat wakes a virgin future!

I hear the moments fathom the abyss,
From which no power can ever haul them up.
Why lug about the memory of the past?

Make a clean mind of it! Say, alchemist,
Do you indulge in vain regrets?

PHIL. (*busy with THRASIMUND'S face*).

Not I!

PASQ. Have you endured no bitter grief?

PHIL. Oh yes!

PASQ. Done anything to be called wrong?

PHIL. I have.

PASQ. And played the fool perhaps?

PHIL. More than enough.

PASQ. How can you say, then, you have
no regrets!

URB. He has another use for his mishaps
Than to regret them.

PASQ. What may that be?

URB. Why,

To digest them, Pasqual. Hence have we
brains!

A mental mastication, slow and sure,
Eupeptic consciences and wilful blood

Transform our blunders to experience, sinew
And staple of all wisdom.

[PHILADELPHUS *stands aside and reveals the rejuvenated THRASIMUND. His beard has been shaved off; his hair and moustache dyed red; his eyebrows soaped; and his cheeks rouged.*]

URB. Handsome youth!

A shade too florid; but colour is convincing.
Send for his wife and we shall see them
meet.

[PHILADELPHUS *and ALMERIC carry THRASIMUND in his chair to the recess at the back, and he is hidden behind the curtain. ULRIC takes the message to VIOLANTE.*]

Enter JUNIPERT, gaily dressed.

JUNI. Salute, your majesty!

ALM. What is your name,
And business?

PHIL. An astucity of ours,
Magicians, necromancers, is to know
The names of chance-companions. His, I
think,
Is Junipert.

JUNI. It is. My business, now?

ALM. Come, sorcerer.

PHIL. His business? That profane
Unprofitable art of poem-making.

JUNI. My business with the king, I
mean.

PHIL. Oh, that!
You come upon Saturnia's behalf,
Who saved you from a beggary more base
By making you her laureate, Junipert.

JUNI. All this the world may hear from
envious tongues.
Can you announce my mistress's affair?

PHIL. That you are here to tell—and
luckily ;

For my prophetic frenzy ends at once.

URB. Well, sir ?

JUNI. I have the honour to appear
For the forlorn, divine Saturnia,
Queen of the Lombards. Having newly learned
That Lombardy is on the eve of war,
She craves an audience of your majesty
To bid farewell.

URB. When did Saturnia
Become a queen ?

JUNI. Upon your wedding-day.

PHIL. Very poetical !

PASQ. My lord ?

URB. Yes, friend.

PASQ. Give her no audience.

URB. Did you know of this ?

PASQ. I did. Indoors she keeps a pagan
state,

But never moves abroad.

URB. And I, untold!

I must have spies, it seems!—spies, and a
headsman!

Say to Saturnia Urban grants her wish.

PASQ. Your majesty——

URB. Now, you are meddlesome.

Not since we parted has she brought herself
In any way at all to my remembrance.
Doubt not, since now she does so, she obeys
Some clear necessity.

JUNI. I humbly thank
Your majesty. My mistress will set out
As soon as I return.

URB. (*softly to himself*). Saturnia,
Queen of the Lombards.

[*goes out by a private door.* PASQUAL
goes out towards the city.]

JUNI. Have you by any chance
A brother in the town, called Philadelphus?

PHIL. Augmenting daily a prodigious fame
By diligent pursuit of what he wants ;
A great philosopher ?

JUNI. He *calls* himself
Philosopher ; notorious too, he is,
For some absurdity.

PHIL. Notorious be it.
I know him very well ; a noble fellow.

JUNI. I never liked the man at all.

PHIL. No ? Well ;
I shall go with you, and tell you certain
truths
About yourself will make you like him less.

[*They go out together.*]

Enter HILDEBRAND.

ALM. (*astonished to see him*). Good day,
my lord.

HILD. Does the queen leave her room ?

ALM. I cannot tell ; but here is nurse
who can.

Enter Nurse.

HILD. How is my grandchild?

NURSE. Very well, my lord.

Heaven bless your lordship! You are a
stranger here;

But births compose old quarrels.

[HILDEBRAND *shows displeasure.*]

For her eyes—

As like her father's as a pair of beads;

And such a handsome nose! I think we
know

From whom your lordship's grandchild takes
her nose!

And noticing already!

*Enter two Men-servants with cushions and
shawls. They cross the hall to the back,
the Nurse nodding approval.*

HILD. And the queen's health?

NURSE. Oh, wonderful! Her grace will
take the air

To-day for the first time.

SERVANT. Where shall we put them?

NURSE. Under the chestnut, by the bed of
pinks,

Beside the carp-pond. I must see myself!

The queen will come immediately, my lord.

[goes out, preceded by the Men-servants.]

HILD. Go after them.

ALM. I am in attendance here.

HILD. Attend without, then! I would be
alone

With the king's wife, my daughter.

[ALMERIC goes out sullenly.]

*Enter OSMUNDA, attended by Ladies, one of
whom carries SYBIL.*

OSM. *(surprised and gratified)*. Happily—
Most happily! My first encounter, father!

HILD. Sweet peace betide you; joy and
all delight!

[*They are both embarrassed. At last*
OSMUNDA leads her father by the
hand to the Lady who carries
SYBIL.]

Your child, my dear?

OSM. My child! She is asleep.

Oh, you should see her eyes! like sapphire
lamps

Burning with sacred fire! They laugh at me;
But I am sure she knew me yesterday.

[*accompanies the Ladies out, and returns*
immediately.]

You wish to see the king? You will be
friends?

HILD. Do you desire it?

OSM. Why am I his wife?

HILD. That was my fault and folly. And
I come

To beg my daughter's pardon, now, at last.

OSM. Oh, sir, beg no one's pardon! Be yourself!

HILD. I am myself now truly; and what amends

May yet be wrung from destiny, I mean

To gladden you withal. [*They sit.*]

The king has thrust

The state aside like useless lumber; rears

Himself alone in front of Lombardy,

Dazzling the foolish world. Furbished,
equipped,

And amply manned, by stealth and unprovoked,

Against the Franks he marches forth to-morrow.

OSM. Against the Franks!

HILD. It is reported so.

Their new king, Pepin, has made a name
in war,

And Urban is envious. But some of us
Who cherish peace and reverence law, will
choke

This outrage ere it issue to the light.

OSM. What do you mean?

HILD. You must know all in time ;
This, now : We shall proclaim our Lucian king ;
You, regent.

OSM. Regent—king ! while Urban lives ?

HILD. (*rises ; deliberately*). No.

OSM. (*rises, and withdraws from her father*).

You would not murder him !

HILD. We shall do

No murder. Urban is the rebel ; we,
His peers, have sat in judgment. All my
friends

Await us at my house. Thither I go.

Come after with your daughter, openly.

OSM. My father plots against my husband's
life !

HILD. What! would you spare a husband
you abhor? [grasps her hand.]

Do what I say.

OSM. I will not do this thing.

HILD. Will not! Osmunda!

[releases her hand, and speaks persuasively,
imploringly.]

But I hide the heart

Of my desire. Not for a jealous clique,
Not to crown Lucian, nor avenge your wrongs
Or my defeat, have I in prudent age
And the dispassionate temper time implants,
Belied my judgment, strangled every birth
Of conscience, fertile yet as the fresh ground
In times Saturnian, though blood be stale
And life at ebb; but I have gagged my
thought,

Tarnished the silver of the years myself
In reverence held, for you and for your child,
My blood, that it may reign in Lombardy.

Lucian?—a stalking-horse! And step by
step,

Ruse upon ruse, as studied and secure
As any gambit, have I planned it out
To make my grandchild queen. This perfect
plot

Was nurtured in my brain while in your womb
Your daughter grew; and their affinity
Is indestructible: the plot, the child,
Are one; my blood, my brain. Throughout
these months

Of impotence, dishonour, nothingness,
The infamy and canker of defeat,
By this design transmuted, seemed to me
Renown and health. My daughter dare not
thwart me!

OSM. I am a wife; and to the king, my
husband,

I will be loyal: a mother, and Urban's child
Shall never say that I deceived her father

Even for my father's sake.

[*sits again, trembling at the direct conflict
with her father.*]

HILD. You will not come!

OSM. (*rises ; beseechingly*). Oh, escape
This cruel goad of power! Stay here by me :
The plot will melt away if you withdraw.
Stay by me all the evening; sleep here
to-night;

And in the morning this will be a dream.

HILD. And leave my daughter, whom I
offered up
On the stained altar of a loveless bed,
A nightly victim, while my stricken soul
Discerns its guilt, and grasps expedient means
Of reparation and deliverance!

OSM. I am contented—happy, as I am.

HILD. It is your weakness speaks! When
Urban dies,
Your true love Lucian, for a time, perhaps——

OSM. This is to tempt—to tempt! The king must know!

[runs to the door of the Council-room, and opening it, looks in.]

Not here!—What shall I do?

HILD. (*to himself*). At fault! at fault!

Now must I act at once! Leave her in doubt—

I know her nature—she will fear to speak.—

Truly, Osmunda, my conspiracy

Is rooted in your will. You cast it out;

It dies, and as I say it, disappears

Into the limbo of abortive things.

If I have hurt you yet it was for you

I chiefly wrought. Forget it.

OSM. You will stay?

HILD. Stay?

OSM. Yes, with me until to-morrow.

HILD. No;

I must instruct my friends, or they may move

Without me to disaster.

OSM. Stay by me!

HILD. I cannot. Rest in peace. All shall
be well. [*goes out.*]

OSM. All shall be well!—Do I misjudge
this man—

My father?—who would pander to my dream,
And tear from heaven a memory insphered
Among the stars, as distant and as sweet!

Re-enter Nurse.

NURSE. Madam!—madam!

OSM. Bring me my baby, nurse.

NURSE. But, madam, we——

OSM. And bid them all return.

[*Nurse goes out in a huff.*]

My heart has quite forgotten Lucian, now!

Only the spirit of my early love

Is vigilant above me in the skies.—

To tell my husband? To accuse my father!

How if my father means to stay his hand?

Were I to tell of it, and he repent!—

I know what I shall do ; I see a way!

How glad I am the king had gone!—

[goes to the door at the back.]

Quick, nurse!

Re-enter Nurse, Servants, and Ladies with SYBIL.

OSM. *(taking SYBIL in her arms)*. Poor

mite!—poor little woman. Had you been

A boy—I had not loved you better! No!—

Go in. *[gives SYBIL to the Nurse.]*

NURSE. Already, madam? Why the air

Is like a cup of hippocras!

OSM. A cup

Is brewing, nurse, I hope we may set by.

Get all of you into the turret-room; stay
there

Till I return.

NURSE. Oh, madam—

OSM. Not a word!

[*detaining one of her Ladies.*]

You come with me. I am going to the camp ;
Out by the garden gate and through the city,
To see the Duke of Garda, or to take
Command myself. I have a thing to do.—
No ; arm in arm. Cover your face.

[OSMUNDA *and one of her Ladies veil
their faces and go out by a private
door, while the Nurse, etc., return to
their apartments.*

*Re-enter ALMERIC. He draws aside the curtain
and shows THRASIMUND still asleep.*

ULRIC *re-enters at the same time.*

ULR. How is the patient?

ALM. Judging by his hue
In a high fever. Is Violante coming?

ULR. She follows me.

ALM. The ruddy-cheeked Adonis

Begins to stir. See! . . . You must tell the king.

[ULRIC *goes out, while* THRASIMUND *opens his eyes, blinks, sits up, twists about his head, and rubs his neck.*]

THRA. Been sleeping in a draught? and with a draught

In me, now I remember. Filthy stuff!
Something has happened. I have been asleep—
That's certainty. Was it rejuvenescence?
The beauty sleep? I wonder.

[*rises and comes down, endeavouring to walk with a youthful stride, but soon drops into the old man's shuffle.*]

Elixir Vitæ

Is not a remedy for rheumatism.

ALM. (*affecting not to know* THRASIMUND).

You wish to see the king?

THRA. Yes . . . you

ALM. What name

Shall I announce ?

Re-enter ULRIC.

THRA. And you ? Do you not know me ?

ULR. Know you ? Not from Adam !

ALM. Where's Thrasimund ?

ULR. His chair is empty !

ALM. (*professing to recognize him*). Thrasimund ! By heaven !

ULR. Not a day older now than Almeric !

ALM. Frankly, my lord, I thought the
mage a quack ;

But such a sprightly eye, such lustrous looks,
And the whole juvenility and joy
Of life, your effluence and aureole
Proclaim the matchless virtue of the elixir.

THRA. (*feeling his chin*). My beard ! It
seems to have removed my beard.

ALM. It has a power——

THRA. And left me my moustache !

ALM. And subtlety beyond belief.

ULR. (*whispering*). The king,
Until Saturnia has been and gone,
Sees no one, Almeric. Astounding news!

[*They talk apart.*]

THRA. (*to himself*). This, my moustache,
which once was grey, is now
A very brilliant auburn—and my hair.
When I was young—the first time—I believe
The hue was mousy-brown. A potent
draught!

An impotent old fool! If it had turned
My ancient rheumatism to muscle now,
And made me feel a youth! Perhaps the
feeling

Develops later on. I took the thing
Internally; but medicine so occult
May start its operation from without.
I am in process of renovation. Faith
Is always half the cure. I will behave,

Despite delusion, youthfully, and help
The magic potion.

Re-enter PHILADELPHUS and JUNIPERT. The latter, endeavouring to shake off PHILADELPHUS, walks quickly round the hall; but the philosopher sticks to him.

PHIL. So my philosophy
In character is altogether new;
The essence of a personal experience
Not to be brought to book by culture; but——

THRA. (*catching PHILADELPHUS'S sleeve*).

The sorcerer himself! It was no dream!
You gave me of the Elixir Vitæ?

PHIL. Yes.

[*takes THRASIMUND by the shoulders and gravely examines his appearance.*]

The pupil—thirty; iris—twenty-five.
The agency has not been equable.
Show me your tongue. A little pallid; that,

Indubitably constitutional.

Your pulse?—Umph!—Sixty-six, but regular.

Complexion sanguine ; the moustache and hair

A goodly red. In spite of certain faults,

Irregularities that mark in you

The assimilation of rejuvenescence,

I honestly pronounce you, let us say,

A healthy, capable courageous man

Of twenty-eight.

THRA. But then my rheumatism?

PHIL. The pain of that may trouble you
for long,

Just as the soldier who has lost a foot

May feel its corns in rainy weather shoot.

But I assure you it is gone, quite gone.

THRA. I see.

PHIL. And were you certain of your health
Already, you were less or more than man.

But you can test and prove your youth at
once

And most decisively. Saturnia,
The Queen of Lombardy——

THRA. Osmunda !

PHIL. No ;

Saturnia. The Elixir innovates
Not the imbiber only, but the whole
Condition of the world. Have patience, now.
The mystery will unfold itself in time.
You must approach Saturnia when she
comes ;
Address her gallantly ; recall your youth ;
Employ your fascination ; play the man ;
Observe how your appearance and your
talk
Enchant the queen, and be convinced for
good.

THRA. What shall I talk about ?

PHIL. A traveller asks
A subject of discourse !

THRA. Why, to be sure !

Enter two Girls garlanded, playing on pipes. After them young Men and Maidens representing EROS and PSYCHE, MAIA, FLORA, VERTUMNUS and POMONA, SYLVANUS, FAUNUS, PAN, Nymphs and Shepherds with thyrsi and crooks.

After these SATURNIA, wearing a gold crown and a rich robe of state, followed by her Seneschal, Chamberlain, and other Officers fantastically dressed. JUNIPERT joins the group. ULRIC goes out quickly.

SAT. The king—where is he?

PHIL. (*whispering*). Briskly now, my lord.

THRA. The king is busy in his chamber, madam.

SAT. Who is this lord?

[sits in a chair which has been placed for her in the centre of the hall.]

THRA. My name is Thrasimund,

Fresh from Jerusalem. Beneath the hills
Of Lombardy I went by Danube's banks!
And to behold that river would surprise you:
Out of the land it bursts with such a force,
Such volume that for thirty miles the sea
Is sweet as mountain springs. Jerusalem?
A marvellous city! This astonished me:
It has no river; now I always thought
It stood upon the Jordan. Not at all:
The Jordan rolls its waves a long way off.
Were you aware of that?

SAT. Why this to me?

THRA. I wish to entertain you with my
travels.

SAT. Indeed you entertain me wondrously!

THRA. Why, that consoles and gratifies me,
madam.

And if you knew the reason of my wish
To please, to entertain, to fascinate,
You would be highly pleased, and entertained,

And fascinated, I make bold to say.

Enter VIOLANTE. She comes slowly down the hall, unseen by THRASIMUND.

ULR. (*whispering to PHILADELPHUS*). Look ;
Violante and the crisis comes !

SAT. Pray, fascinate me, then.

THRA. In me behold,
If men be true and alchemy no lie,
The most astounding creature in the world.

SAT. Indeed I think you are !

THRA. My lustrous looks
Have drawn remark already ; but the source,
The secret of my beauty——

SAT. I understand
At last ! You are a treasure to the king,
A constant solace, doubtless.—Junipert,
I have no court fool. See that you get me
one.

Could *he* be lent me for a day or two ?

THRA. Magician!

[*looks about for PHILADELPHUS, who
has hidden himself at the back of
the hall.*]

Court fool! lend me!

VIOL. It is I

Who have the lending of this gentleman.

THRA. (*much dismayed*). My dear——

VIOL. Come home with me, sir. We are
quits!

THRA. (*becoming intensely excited*). I'm not
the old uxorious fool I was;

A young man, Violante! I have drained
The last known drops of the Elixir Vitæ.
It may be I shall never die.

VIOL. Come home!

THRA. The world's my home; doomsday
my only fear!

Re-enter ULRIC, ushering URBAN. In the beginning of the act URBAN had been carelessly dressed; he has now donned a magnificent costume.

Your majesty !

[URBAN ignores THRASIMUND, and advances gravely to SATURNIA, who rises, curtsies, and before URBAN can prevent her, kisses his hand. THRASIMUND continues in a loud voice to VIOLANTE.]

It was the king himself

Who dropped the Elixir Vitæ in the cup.

It made it blue; he saw me drink: the king

Is art and part in my rejuvenescence !

URB. You have a fair Saturnian following.

SAT. My life is empty; and it feeds my thought

To make a pageant of my retinue.

[URBAN *gives SATURNIA his hand across the hall to the door of the Council-room, where ULRIC leads her out.*]

URB. Await me in the presence-room.

THRA. Now then!

URB. Show him a mirror.

[ALMERIC *takes from the wall the burnished shield which THRASIMUND had used, and holds it before him.*]

The Coeval Angle!

THRA. (*stares at the shield; thrusts his face into it; with his handkerchief he wipes his cheek and sees the rouge. He strikes the shield with his fist; braces himself and stands very stiffly amid the subdued laughter of the bystanders*). But I will be avenged for this; I will,

Somehow, be speedily avenged for this.

[goes out at a measured pace.]

URB. The thirst for vengeance has renewed
his strength,

And thus the Elixir Vitae operates.

VIOL. (*demurely*). Have you no mercy for
a penitent?

URB. Attend your husband, madam; treat
him well.

(*To SATURNIA'S retinue, gaily*). What we can
offer you in lieu of nectar,

What mortal viands least worthy the disdain
Of your immortal palates, shall be placed
Before you. Pleasure at your table wait.

*[goes out through the Council-room. AL-
MERIC and ULRIC are ushering
SATURNIA'S retinue by a private
door as the curtain falls.]*

NO INTERVAL.

ACT III

THE CONSPIRACY

SCENE. — *The Presence-room in the Royal Palace, Pavia. A throne stands near the centre. There are windows at the back overlooking a garden, and large doors right and left. Lamps are lit. The new moon, at first golden in the light of the fading sunset, shines over the city. As the act proceeds the stars come out, and the moon goes down.*

On the rising of the curtain SATURNIA is discovered in her robe and crown, seated on the throne.

SAT. Shall I have courage? Lofty and cold he seemed.

[rises, and listens at the door on the right.]

He comes—and comes alone! A challenge!

Oh,

I know him! He would prove his self-command.

[returns to the throne, but remains standing.]

What shall I do? How shall I conquer him?

With my true love! Only with my true love!

Enter URBAN. He sits at once on the throne.

URB. Why have you come?

SAT. To hear you speak to me.

I see you every day when you ride forth;

I watch you in the evening riding home.

Last night the sun behind you set in pomp;

And the new moon rode out beside the sun,
A silver bride, gold-stained, the pageant's
queen—

Close to the sun, a token, richly lit
With triumph and intolerable joy.

And all the night I wept: I wept all night,
Because I never may ride out with you.

Then in the morning I began to know
Unless I heard your voice that I should die.—
Oh! speak to me.

URB. You have soiled the name of queen,
Tarnished the crown, and forfeited your life.

SAT. Tarnished the crown? *I* have not
tarnished it.

I crowned myself upon your wedding-day,
And bade my people call me queen, to know
In fancy the embroidery of love
That should be mine.

URB. That should be yours?

SAT. Mine! mine!

The crown was tarnished when you cast me
off.

Such love as ours!—Remember . . .

[URBAN *rises, impatient with himself,*
as he feels his resolution shaken.]

But remember!

I was Saturnia, the golden age
Incarnate; one inspired by innocence
And beauty to annul the use and wont
Of musty centuries. They were your words!

[URBAN *sinks down on the throne.*]

URB. I set you free and made of you a
friend;

Taught you to know, and watched your love-
liness

Increase and deepen as your spirit grew

In apprehension and accomplishment.

Then I . . . (*hesitates*).

SAT. What then? Why, when our lives
had knit

Themselves in one, you hacked me off as
men

In frenzies cut and hew their limbs; and all
To please the Lombard nobles, to exalt
Your glory as a self-denying king!

URB. All that was dearest I severed from
my heart:

The votary of empire dare not spend
His idlest moment on a passionate love.

SAT. Empire! What is empire? Where
is Rome
That sat above the nations? Power and
state

Are dust and ashes to a love like mine!

*[takes off her crown, and drops it on
the floor.]*

Fall, shadow of a shadow! Foolish gown!

*[unfastens her robe. It slips from her
shoulders, and she appears as in the
first act.]*

I know now that I cannot live again
As I have lived. Take back the queenly
wealth

You gave me. I am Urban's slave, and
happy.

I have thrown the burden off.

[kneels at his feet.]

What will *you* do?

URB. *(looks at her long; rises irresolutely.
At last, standing beside her, he replies).*

I will go on with what I have decreed.

*[is about to leave her; but she seizes his
hand and rises, drawing closer to
him as she speaks, until she has her
hands in his hair, and her cheek on
his breast.]*

SAT. And I from woe to woe! I bleed
to death,

Cut off from you. I am a part of you:

Kill me outright, if that will help; if not,

Leave me no longer a phantasmal thing
To fade alone, but make me your delight,
And bid me crown your glory with my love.

URB. (*taking her fingers from his hair.*) My
fate is in my hands! Were I to make
You mine again, the conduct of my life
Would pass from my control. I will go on
King of myself. I tore you from my heart :
That sacrifice accomplished, is there a deed
Between me and my aim to make me shrink ?

SAT. But why—why tear me from your
heart ?

URB. (*angrily.*) Is that
A mystery still? My love for you engulfed
My blood and thought : I had to be
Your lover only, or a king of men ;
And to be king is greater than to love !

SAT. But I could be contented with a
look,
A word between your triumphs.

URB. I love myself

Too well to overthrow the edifice

And fair proportion of my youth ; and you

Too well to change the soul that opened
heaven

For me, and made me man, into the stale

And fashionable mistress of a king.

Power is my chosen bride !

VOICES (*from the Council-room*). The king !
the king !

[*He draws his sword, and holding SATURNIA behind him with his left hand, crosses to the door on the left. This bursts open as he reaches it, and THRASIMUND, LUDOLF, ADALBERT, and Soldiers enter armed. URBAN leaps back with SATURNIA, making for the other door ; but by it PASQUAL, ALMERIC, and ULRIC are driven in, fighting with HILDE-*

BRAND *and other* Lords *and* Soldiers.
Some of the Rabble *and a few*
Citizens *crowd in ; among them*
PHILADELPHUS *and* JUNIPERT.
Lastly the BISHOP *enters.* URBAN,
overpowered by HILDEBRAND *and*
others, is in danger of his life.]

BISH. Take him alive !

[URBAN *is seized from behind and his*
hands tied. PASQUAL, ALMERIC,
and ULRIC *are driven out fighting.]*

THRA. (*fiercely, pointing to* SATURNIA).

Truss up this wanton here !

[Soldiers *tie* SATURNIA'S *hands.*]

Now, madam queen, that would have me for
fool !

HILD. (*to the* BISHOP). For whom are
you ?

BISH. For justice !

HILD. So am I !

THRA. So are we all!

HILD. Urban, you are deposed.

URB. For what offence?

HILD. The crimes that kings commit
When power corrupts them into enemies
Of law and of their country. You must die.

THRA. (*raising his sword*). And I shall be
his executioner!

URB. You will not mend the laws you say
I broke
By killing me off-hand. My peers must
hear

Me speak in my defence.

BISH. It is most just.

HILD. Time pinches us, my lord. He has
many friends.

BISH. He must have justice, though he be
unjust.

HILD. Brief justice, then! Here in the
presence-room.

URB. (*to* THRASIMUND, *indicating* SATURNIA). What has this gentle prisoner done, my lord?

THRA. I have both hands full of my vengeance, now!

URB. (*smiling*). It ill becomes your juvenility

To cherish hate, so rapidly matured,
Against Saturnia, the golden age.

THRA. Lewd mocker!—Take her hence!
Her turn will come.

[SATURNIA *is led out.*]

LUD. Let Thrasimund preside.

ADAL. The wisest head
In Lombardy, the true-divining brain
That first unmasked this subtle tyrant.

THRA. No,
Too partial friends; I play another rôle.
It is the bishop's place. Sit here, my lord.

[*The BISHOP takes the throne.*]

HILD. Now, Urban, your defence.

BISH. Let him first know
Of what he stands accused.

HILD. (*to the* BISHOP). You shall preside ;
But we, my lord, who risk our lives and
lands,
Stealing what is the world's due, justice,
mean

Our purpose to achieve with all despatch.—
(*to* URBAN). Speak.

URB. Give me matter ; formulate a charge.
Discourses hung on nothing squander time,
Of which you seem so chary.

THRA. Answer me, then !
Why are Duke Hildebrand and my good
friends,
Ludolf and Adalbert, and every mind
Grounded in policy and capable of rule,
Dismissed from office, power, emolument?

VOICES. Ay! ay!

LUD. Power, privilege, and fortune gone!

THRA. Why do you levy war without
advice

And secretly?—To sum up all, my lords,
The King of Lombardy, a judge in peace,
In war a leader, has deposed himself
By heedless usurpation of the powers
That rest in law alone. Let him show cause
Why he should not be haled to instant
death.

HILD. What need? Why should he speak?
It maddens me

To see him standing there, a felon, bound,
Mature for death, disdaining all of us!
I will not hear him! Death, and no word
more!

VOICES. Death! death!

BISH. It must not be. You may undo
Injustice by injustice, but the right
Can be established only by the right.—

My lord and king, for such you are, we wait
Your pleasure.

URB. Most reverend, and my lords,
My pleasure is to bid you think.—With man
Abides an instinct unsubduable
To utter and make good what in him lies
Of power and greatness.

HILD. Oh! we know this plea!
So reasoned Lucifer when he rebelled.

URB. Lucifer claimed a place which was
not his.

How, if I have, as I believe I have,
A natural right to do as I have done?

HILD. Shall we hear more?

LUD. The man's a nincompoop!

URB. Your anger vindicates my secret
way.

No hero publishes what he intends,
Because to tell of deeds that are undone
Is to distemper them in paltry minds,

And blunt their edge against the world's ill-
will.

THRA. A hero! you! It was heroic—
yes!—

To give an old man in a cup of wine
A sleep like death that ribald mountebanks
And mocking boys might load him with
contempt!

It *is* a sort of parricide for youth
To bring age to derision: that alone
Deserves an instant, ignominious death!

VOICES. Death! instant death!

BISH. Urban, if you can show
How in your hidden counsel the common-
weal

Might reap peculiar benefit, the law
May yet be set aside.

URB. Is that my choice?
Death or to tell my purpose?

BISH. No, my lord;

To tell your purpose will not save your life,
Unless your purpose and its secrecy
Receive our sanction.

URB. I am too young to die—
To reach the welcome threshold of renown,
Then step into an unremembered grave!
Here's for my life!—The empire of the world,
No less, is my ambition. Marauding hordes
Have made the earth a byword. Without a
head,

The peoples now become each other's prey;
And the imperial throne awaits the king
Who knows himself its destined occupant.
My passion and my dream replenished me
With self-faith absolute. Of Lombardy
I had forged a blade to reap the nations
with.

The centred might of all humanity
I meant to grasp, as Cæsar did before,
And hear the astonished world hail me divine.

VOICES (*laughing scornfully*). Ha! ha! ha!
ha!

BISH. You have condemned yourself.

HILD. A cut-throat king, who of his
countrymen

Would make a knife to rob upon the high-
way!

URB. My lords, it is with nations as with
men:

One must be first. We are the mightiest,
The heirs of Rome; and with the power
there lies

A ruthless obligation on our souls
To be despotic for the world's behoof.
Ruthless, I say; because the destinies
Admit no compromise: we must be first,
Though everlasting war cement each course
Of empire with our blood; or cease to be,
Our very name and language in dispute.
I am your king. Untie my bonds, and say,

"Be great, and make us great!"

HILD. We'll have no wars!

ADAL. There are our lands to till, our
towns to build.

BISH. God grant us peace in our time!
You must die.

The empire of the sword has passed away;
The world is now the City of God; in Rome
His great vicegerent reigns.

HILD. Strike off his head!

LUD. Who shall behead him?

BISH. True; we have no headsman.

HILD. That strange, half-crazy fellow
Philadelphus,

Give him the place he seeks.

[PHILADELPHUS *comes forward, rubbing*
his hands.]

URB. No headsman——

HILD. No;

Thanks to your imbecile humanity!

URB. No king to make one either, I
being deposed !

But it is common law in Lombardy
That, if there be no headsman, one con-
demned

To death may take the office—which, indeed,
Is civil death. Even at so great a cost
I'll save my life, loving it as I do.

[*Incredulous murmurs.*]

BISH. *You* will be headsman !

ADAL. You, the pardoner,
The ape of mercy !

URB. Life is sweet, my lords.

BISH. How pitiful a thing a tyrant is !

HILD. He punishes himself more terribly
Than our just sentence.

BISH. But it is the law,
Which you are here in arms to vindicate.

PHIL. Your cowardice, my lord, your
tragic-farce

Is tragedy for me : I had grasped the axe
Almost.—Well, I shall be your acolyte.

HILD. Off with him ! Clad him in the
headsman's dress,

And bring him quickly back.

PHIL. Come, master mine.
I know where all is kept.

THRA. The emperor
Of the world !

URB. Emperor ? Viceroy, the headsman
is—

Death's deputy.

BISH. Though such a bloodless change
Is not ungrateful, yet it grieves my soul
To find you out a craven at the core.

[URBAN *is about to retort, but refrains ;*
bows gravely, and is led out, fol-
lowed officiously by PHILADELPHUS.]

BISH. To-morrow we shall meet to choose
a king. [goes out.]

LUD. Our king is chosen : Lucian !

ALL. Lucian ! Lucian !

THRA. Resource is coiled in Urban's brain,
a swarm

Of snakes ; he'll dupe us yet.

ADAL. Impossible !

LUD. Nothing can make atonement for
the shame

He volunteers to suffer.

HILD. Who can tell ?

Should he by chance or craft return to power,
The foolish folk may weave it in his legend,
And idolize the king who chose disgrace
To save them from a batch of oligarchs.

THRA. So will it work, unless . . .

[*chuckles.*]

HILD. Unless . . . Go on !

THRA. Unless he were to dip his hands in
blood.

If once he wields the headsman's axe !

HILD. By heaven!

That puts him out of court! This very day
He shall be notified to do his office.

There is a famous robber now condemned——

THRA. Yes, but a craftier way were to
require

Our princely headsman's duty on a friend,
That he might show in full his loyalty
To his new masters.

HILD. Make him execute
A friend of his? There he will halt, I think.

THRA. And forfeit so his life.

HILD. Which is our aim.

THRA. Let me bring this to pass. A
moment, friends. *[goes out.]*

LUD. What will he do?

HILD. Doubtless he means to yoke
A private purpose with his patriotism.

LUD. So statesmen work; an interest in
the crop

Makes ploughing easy.

ADAL. That's where the bishop fails :
He takes a superficial artless view
Of what's apparent.

HILD. The complex heart of things
Is never understood, till one is led
To do wrong cheerfully that good may come.

*Re-enter THRASIMUND with SATURNIA, bound,
and a Soldier carrying SATURNIA'S robe
and crown.*

THRA. This is a woman who has lived too
long.

*[places the crown on SATURNIA'S head,
while the Soldier throws the robe
round her.]*

You saw they were together when we came :
I saw her seated in the scorner's chair,
A Roman slave, a creature calling herself
Queen of the Lombards.

HILD. She it was who sowed
Licence and levity in Urban's mind :
It is as though I were beaten on the mouth
To think she should be chosen before my
daughter !

THRA. Her most presumptuous treason
and her life
Of sin condemn her.

HILD. And the law says death.

THRA. God's law and man's !

HILD. Are we agreed ?

VOICES. Death ! death !

THRA. Hail, Queen of the Lombards ! How
do you like the fool ?

SAT. What have you done with Urban ?

THRA. He is dead.

SAT. O cruel men ! Did he not on his
knees
Entreat to see me ?

THRA. No ; he killed himself.

SAT. (*straining her bonds*). My hands are
tied, or I would follow him!

And did he leave no word?

THRA. No; but be sure
You'll see him when you come to die.

SAT. May be;
For love is stronger than the gates of death;
And this I know, he loved me.

THRA. (*opening the door on her right*). But
his ghost,
Remember, will be quaintly dressed in black,

[*Re-enter URBAN in the headsman's dress,
followed by PHILADELPHUS.*]

Just like this apparition!

URB. Saturnia!

[*He has a premonition of what is coming.*]

SAT. It is my lord! They tortured me
with lies!

And I shall hear you say you love me!

HILD. Headsman,
Saturnia, mistress of the king dethroned,
Queen of the Lombards by her own decree,
To-day will expiate her spotted life ;
And you shall flesh your maiden axe in blood
That beat with guilty passion for a fool.
Get ready.

URB. (*looks steadily at HILDEBRAND, then
turns to SATURNIA*). They are subtler
than I thought.

This is the end, Saturnia. We must die.

SAT. Together ?

URB. Together.

HILD. So, your headsmanship
Was but a sorry ruse to purchase time.

URB. (*to SATURNIA*). A desperate hope.

This is the headsman's dress.

SAT. Oh, my dear love !

[*closes her eyes and leans her head on his
shoulder. The robe falls from her.*]

URB. (*to* PHILADELPHUS). You have your
heart's desire,

Philosopher.

HILD. Will you be headsman?

PHIL. Yes,

Since I may not be king.

HILD. About it, then.

PHIL. The handsomest heads in Lom-
bardy! A pair!

He has my dress, though!

HILD. No more toilets now!

The dress is yours when you have earned it.

Quick! [PHILADELPHUS *goes out.*]

Adalbert, come with me. We must in haste
To the army and displace the Duke of
Garda.

(*to* URBAN). No last appeal? No high re-
proof? No taunt?

THRA. (*to* URBAN *and* SATURNIA). You
keep your countenances still; but death

Is downstairs, in the courtyard—the axe, the
block ;

By torchlight too ! Some dozen heart-beats
hence—

Count it in blood !—you shall be lopped and
spilt

Upon the stones, as dead as carrion.

I shall be there to mark your tears, your
pallor.

[*All go out except URBAN, SATURNIA
and JUNIPERT.*]

JUNI. Madam, if I could die for you !

SAT. Alas !

URB. Your knife.

JUNI. Not that way !

URB. Fool ! To cut her bonds.

JUNI. Ah, fool indeed, dreaming impos-
sibles

While this is in my power !

[*cuts SATURNIA'S bonds.*]

SAT. How can I thank you!
I loved your poems, sir. I think of one
Beginning, "Death, the sweetest friend of man,
Redeems the world." . . . Yes, but I have my
crown! [*gives her crown to JUNIPERT.*]
And if I had a kingdom it were yours
For this rich freedom. [*embraces URBAN.*]

JUNI. Madam, what must . . .

[*URBAN presses JUNIPERT'S hand, and
takes his dagger.*]

But . . .

[*Soldiers enter and JUNIPERT is led out.*]

SAT. Say that you love me. Say it till
they come.

[*As URBAN speaks, SATURNIA is gradually
overpowered by fear.*]

URB. I love you only. Empire, power,
renown,
Have passed away; time and the world are
stripped

To one sole heart of being, you and me.
Let us not hope, not dream, but only live
In this new ecstasy ; or think how soon
Together, undismayed, we two shall ford
The shrouded stream that every soul must
cross : *[clasping her close.]*

And measure thus the moments, pulse by
pulse,

Till death shall make us one eternally.

SAT. Yes, yes ! But it is sickening to die
With all our life unlived, our love unloved !

URB. Not all ! not all ! Remember purple
hours

When eager stars hung low to reach the
earth ;

When through our open casement robber
winds

With pillage of the roses blew all night,
And in your hair the scented spoil was
caught.

SAT. (*frantically*). Oh, Urban, save me!
save me!

URB. Death will save us!
A thousand lives rebel within me, bent
On liberty and happiness——

SAT. My heart cries out for life and love.

URB. This travail means
A world beyond the world; it heralds heaven;
Establishes our immortality.

SAT. But I am mad with fear—the axe,
the block,
The hideous blow! [*she breaks from him.*]
Oh! it is dark already! [*shrilly.*]
Ah! I am falling, down below the grave
Where devils writhe!

URB. (*clasping her again*). Hush! we shall
fall asleep
As soon as death has spread our bridal couch.
How will you greet me when the morning
comes?

SAT. The morning?

URB. Yes; the morning after death.

What will you say to me?

SAT. Do you believe

That we shall be together after death?

URB. For ever after death.

SAT. And I shall be

Your bride?

URB. My bride. What will you say to me?

How will Saturnia greet me when we wake?

SAT. Oh, I will greet you with a kiss, and
say

Good morning in the land beyond the grave!

[*A distant noise of arms is heard; then
rapid footsteps.*]

SAT. Death comes!

URB. To open wide the door of life!

[*The noise becomes a tumult. Enter
HILDEBRAND, running with his
sword drawn; THRASIMUND with*

a dagger ; ADALBERT and LUDOLF unarmed. HILDEBRAND strikes at URBAN as he passes through the room. URBAN wards off the blow with his dagger and shelters himself behind the throne. HILDEBRAND is about to strike again, but the noise of shouts and fighting approaches rapidly, and he desists. In the mean time THRASIMUND has got behind URBAN.]

HILD. (*as he goes out*). To-day the dice
have fallen awry for me ;

But from Ravenna I will come in arms,
And drag you from the throne you desecrate.

THRA. (*stabbing URBAN*). I'll jag him from
it now ! [*runs out after HILDEBRAND.*]

URB. Only a glance.

[*places SATURNIA behind the open door.*]
Stand here, Saturnia. Here you will be safe

From knaves and frantic blows.

GARD. (*calling from the Council-room*). Urban! My lord!

URB. The Duke of Garda! I am king again!

[*Enter the DUKE OF GARDA. Soldiers fill up the doorway.*]

The glorious world that death had swallowed
up

Rises about me like a thronging tide.

I stand upon the summit: life begins

Anew, heroic deeds and high renown!

GARD. And your deliverer——

[*The Soldiers open a passage, and OSMUNDA enters, dishevelled and pale.*]

This heroine!

URB. (*pressing his wound and speaking with difficulty*). Osmunda!

OSM. (*to GARDA*). No, my lord! 'tis you
have saved

My husband's life.

SAT. (*stepping from behind the door*). This
is *my* husband ; death united us.

[URBAN *looks from* OSMUNDA *to*
SATURNIA, *from* SATURNIA *to*
OSMUNDA ; *seems about to speak ;*
staggers and falls.]

SAT. (*kneeling beside* URBAN). He is
wounded ! Thrasimund

Poniarded him. Help me !

[*As the curtain falls* OSMUNDA *is*
staring at SATURNIA, *who supports*
URBAN'S *head on her bosom.*]

THREE WEEKS ELAPSE.

ACT IV

OSMUNDA'S POMANDER

SCENE.—URBAN'S *study in the Palace of Pavia.*

At the back a large two-leaved window, brushed by the branches of a tall lime tree. The window is draped. On the left, in a high and deep fireplace, a fire of wood burns. An oaken screen extends from the upper side of the fireplace, across a portion of the room. A curtain, on a rod joined to the screen, shuts off the fireplace except in front ; but when the act opens this is folded back. In front of the screen, a couch and small table with reading-lamp. On the right is a table with documents and writing materials ;

beside it a large chair ; against the wall a sideboard with glasses, etc. There are four alcoves in the wall, containing parchments, scrolls, etc. ; and above the alcoves, niches with busts of Alexander the Great, Cæsar, Hannibal, and Alboin. There are doors right and left ; and an unseen entrance behind the screen.

It is night when the act begins ; the window is open ; and the waning moon shines through the branches of the lime tree.

OSMUNDA, worn out with nursing URBAN, is lying on the couch. She has been reading, and has laid her book open on the table. The physician enters as the curtain rises.

OSM. The king is dressing.

PHY. What !

OSM. He says he must.

PHY. It means his life! Delirious strength
will waste

Him in an hour. His wound will recrudescence
And suppurate. Why am I not obeyed?

OSM. (*rises*). You have been obeyed. The
king's delirium

Is spent; his thought coherent; and his eyes,
That roamed like ruined light, become again
The sentinels of reason.

PHY. Then he slept
At last?

OSM. I was beside him when he fell
Asleep, my little Sybil in my arms.
Which was the gentler sleeper, more at home
In the benighted land of slumber, I
Essayed in vain to tell.

[*steps are heard behind the screen.*]

Here is the king.

I shall not see him unless he asks for me.

[*goes out.*]

Enter URBAN, leaning on PASQUAL'S shoulder.

He is haggard and weak.

PHY. I trust your majesty, debating well
Ability and inclination, found
Your strength to rise equal to your desire :
To leave your bed so soon is perilous.

URB. The peril is my own, the praise is
yours

If I resume the hardihood to risk
Relapse ; but I adventure nothing ; weak
[sits in the large chair.]

As water, yet I feel the founts of life
Break out again, with murmured prophecies
Of dazzling days and nights of wonderment.
I must have music ! Bid the minstrels play.

PHY. I shall instruct them. Music is the
stalk
And flower of health, and most remedial.

[about to go.]

PASQ. (*whispering*). He presses me for news.

What shall I say?

PHY. (*whispering*). Say all, judiciously.

'Twill fret him more

To mark evasion than to know the worst.

[*goes out.*]

URB. Three weeks, you say, at death's door.

PASQ. I maintain

The blade was poisoned.

URB. Oh, impossible!

PASQ. But so inept a wound itself
approached

Your life no nearer than a thorn-prick would.

URB. I am sure there was no poison :
simplest wounds

That miss the first intention smoulder long.

And now the news. Three weeks behind the
times!

The news! This unknown remnant of the
past

Is like a caul about me. Till I know
The best and worst I am as one unborn
Why do you not begin and tell me all?
You said I must not think till I had strength
To rise. I have risen. [*Music is heard.*]

Ah! the minstrelsy!
To such a melody a soul might sing
In torment, smiling and at ease.—The news!
I have a sure presentiment of ill:
Rehearse your story while the music lasts.
Why are you silent? Where is Saturnia?

PASQ. Saturnia? It was the queen who
plucked

You, bleeding, from a ring of thirsty swords,
And with her tender and importunate care
Recaptured for the world your fleeting life.

URB. She is a noble lady, certainly.
Where is Saturnia?

PASQ. I cannot tell.
But I have baffling news of Lombardy.

Saturnia's fate is insignificant.

URB. (*starting from his seat*). Saturnia's
fate ! What have you done with her ?

[*crosses the room hastily and opens a
door.*]

Give over there ! The strings are raw ; the
tune

Insane. [*Music ceases suddenly.*]

What is her fate ?

PASQ. I cannot tell.

URB. You cannot tell ? You mean that
she is dead !

Whoever dared to touch the life of her
Who was to me the hallowed shrine of youth,
Of love, of beauty, the ethereal part
Of the world's delicacy, shall be killed
By some new death of Eastern cruelty
Exceeding fancy.—Is Saturnia dead ?

PASQ. I cannot tell.

URB. Who can ? Who knows her fate ?

Answer me on your life.

PASQ. The queen.

URB. The queen !

A woman's vengeance. Bid her come to me.

No ; she shall be unprepared. [*opens the door.*]

Desire the queen——

[*Re-enter OSMUNDA.*]

Ah ! you have overheard.

OSM. No, as I live !

I kept in call lest you should need my help.

URB. Give me your arm. Look at me—
in the eyes.

Where is Saturnia ?

OSM. In a nunnery.

URB. *Not* dead ?

OSM. Oh no !

URB. The convent of St. Ann's ?

[*OSMUNDA assents.*]

Who placed her there ?

OSM. I did.

URB. Why did you so?

OSM. In the name of justice, and for my
own weal,

And my daughter's.

URB. Yes. . . . Give order now
For her release.

OSM. I cannot.

URB. Cannot! Why?

OSM. (*to PASQUAL*). Have you not told?

PASQ. He would not listen to me.

URB. I listen now.

PASQ. Hildebrand and his gang
Of malcontents fled to Ravenna. . . . [*hesitates.*]

URB. Well?

Go on! These timorous delays are wounds
Deeper than steel can trench. Say all; strike
home.

PASQ. To say it all is to strike home
indeed!

Lucian is King of Lombardy.

URB. Lucian !

I understand you very well. I know.

You say worse than the worst by the world's
width

To make the ill seem good.

PASQ. I have said the truth.

Lucian with allies of Ravenna, and all
The Lombard rebels, overthrew your men,
Followed the Duke of Garda to the gates
Of Pavia, which he now besieges ; took
The royal title, and like a gamester sets
A tempting price upon your head.

URB. A price

Upon my head ! How much ?

PASQ. Ten thousand crowns.

URB. My helmet cost me more!—But is
it true ?

Is Pavia besieged ?

PASQ. I said besieged ;

But our defeat is heavier than that :
Pavia is taken. Nothing remains to us
Except the palace.

URB. (*rises, staggers, and clutches the screen*).
Nothing.

PASQ. And our hearts.

URB. Once on a time the broad earth was
my room.

Between the curtains of the day and night
I strode from east to west, and hourly held
Communion with my great imaginings ;
And now this prison is the only space
That's left me in a universe of worlds !
A dying rat is happier in his hole !
Had I a star to go to, even a waste
Abandoned orb, that fallen spirits shun,
My soul could live at ease. Nothing is mine
Without my kingdom !

[*sinks on couch.—A knocking is heard.*]

Enter, herald ! Cry

The news that's knocking at my heart !

Enter PHILADELPHUS and JUNIPERT. JUNIPERT has been drinking, and walks unsteadily. He keeps behind PHILADELPHUS.

PHIL. The king !

PASQ. Why are you in the palace, Philadelphus ?

PHIL. We came this morning, Junipert and I,
The last to enter ere the gates were closed.

I am playing cicerone to the poet.—

Come, Junipert. The lobby was our way.

PASQ. But why desert the winning side ?

PHIL. Which side

Is that, my lord ? The palace will endure
A three months' siege at least ; and chance
and change

Are most empirical philosophers.

URB. (*rises from the couch*). Three months !

Why, in three months I could create

A kingdom! All is well—better than well!
These golden drops of time, good alchemist,
Are the elixir of our immortal fame.

PHIL. Time is the elixir of all mundane things.

URB. I shall command in person.

[crosses the room, maintaining with difficulty an erect carriage.]

PASQ. You cannot go!

URB. *(thrusting away PASQUAL, who has offered help)*. I need no arm to lean on.
I am king:

Disease and death are subject to me. Come!
To-night an onslaught in the dark shall sweep
Our hasty rebels over Pavia's walls,
Like blood-stained leaves before the whirling
north.

*[goes out, followed anxiously by OS-
MUNDA and PASQUAL. JUNIPERT
takes a leathern bottle from under*

his cloak and drinks. He lays the bottle on the window-sill, removes his cloak, and steps out on the ledge. Then he gets into the branches of the tree, shakes it, and peers down.]

PHIL. I'm not a gymnast! If you fall, remember,

There's no one here to dive and fetch you up.
Air is to breathe, not swim in.

(to himself). Drunken ape!

But something's in his head besides the wine.

[JUNIPERT tumbles into the room.]

You *have* escaped! Then clearly you were
born

To die in bed.

[JUNIPERT gets up, secures his bottle, drinks from it, and hands it to PHILADELPHUS, who replaces the stopper before putting it to his mouth.]

PHIL. This is the way to drink—

The philosophic way.

[seems to take a long pull.]

JUNI. Stupendous lungs!

Stop, selfish drunkard!

PHIL. Oh, there's some left yet!

[returns the bottle to JUNIPERT.]

JUNI. I'll soon test that.

[puts the bottle to his mouth, expecting only a few drops, and is almost choked. The wine pours over his face and clothes. He looks at, and into the bottle, mystified.]

I drank the half of it;

You drank the other half, and yet it seemed

Half full and more just now! The devil's in it!

[flings the bottle out of window.]

PHIL. It was, indeed, a bottle and a half!

JUNI. *(sits in the chair)*. Sit, Philadelphus

—here in the chair beside me.

[PHILADELPHUS sits beside him.]

You know I am a poet ; now, a poet
Is all things to all men——

PHIL. No, Junipert.

JUNI. And nothing to himself.

PHIL. No, Junipert ;
That's the philosopher.

JUNI. Philosopher?
But what I want to say I'm aiming at.
True, I've been drinking—not without a
motive ;
Not for the sake of drinking, understand.
No, my objective as a drunkard is—
Courage.

PHIL. What need have you for extra
courage?

JUNI. I have invented a prodigious plot
Which I am executing now.

PHIL. I see.

JUNI. Being what I am I need a con-
fidant.

Why should a man be burdened with a gift
Of utterance if he's not to utter,—hey?

PHIL. Or with the gift of thirst and not
to drink.

JUNI. Veracity intact! I'll write it down.

*[takes out his tablets and writes. Then
turns over a leaf or two.]*

Here is the draft of it.

PHIL. Of what?

JUNI. The letter.

PHIL. What letter?

JUNI. Read it—read it out aloud.

PHIL. *(reading from JUNIPERT'S tablets).*
“Come to me to-night. My heart” . . . Who
is the subscriber? *(turns over a leaf).* Os-
munda!—“Come to me to-night. My heart—
my pride is broken. I suffer every misery a
husband can inflict upon a wife he hates. I
shall die long before the palace yields if I
am not delivered from this hourly torture.” . . .

What follows here, all interlined?

JUNI. (*in vain endeavours to decipher his own writing*). Minute

Instructions how to enter by the tree

At midnight.

PHIL. Yes, but who?

JUNI. Lucian, of course.

I copied it in scripture feminine,

And Lucian had it yesterday. I climbed

Into the tree to try its wooden strength,

Half hoping he might fall and break his
neck :

'Twill bear him sober since it bore me
drunk.

So here I hide, and when he enters—plump,

[*taking a knife from his bosom.*]

This dagger's in his heart!

PHIL. Oh, well contrived!

JUNI. Poor Lucian dead, the rebels slink
away ;

Osmunda's infidelity appears
By my epistle ; Urban divorces her,
And marries his beloved Saturnia—
My muse and goddess who ascends the
throne

Across my lost soul, damn you, Philadel-
phus !

Consummate plot ! As certain as the dawn !
Oho ! the poet's always misconceived !
The poet's eminently practical !

*[falls out of the chair and rolls over
asleep.]*

PHIL. Friend Junipert, your plot is beauti-
ful ;

You forge and kill that she whom you adore
May marry some one else. Most practical !
Observe my plot now, the philosopher's.
Oh, I've a plot ! More intimate am I
With this old palace, dungeon and battle-
ment,

Than all its deepest denizens, the rats,
Or long-lived crows that whet their beaks
above :

Day in, day out, I searched it for a year.
To-night, in secret, by a way I know,
Enter, who?—Hildebrand and Thrasimund !
A philosophical conspiracy !

You grant humanity consists of men ?
I am a man ; so when I serve myself
I serve humanity. To-morrow, freed
By Urban's death, the Lombards toss their
caps

For despotism o'erthrown—humanity
In the abstract served by me ; while I re-
ceive

Ten thousand golden crowns—humanity
In substance served supremely by itself.
I think my name is fixed in history now !
(*at the door*). Help, here !

Enter Soldier.

SOL. What's this?

PHIL. You see.

[PHILADELPHUS *and the Soldier raise*

JUNIPERT.]

JUNI. Saturnia!

[*They take JUNIPERT out between them.*]

Re-enter URBAN, *supported by the* DUKE OF

GARDA *and* PASQUAL, *and followed by*

OSMUNDA.

URB. Here, on the couch. I am stronger

than I seem. [*lies down on the couch.*]

To-morrow I will head a sortie. Garda,

The scheme of your defence is masterly.

But go to bed : *you* have most need of rest.

I too shall sleep an hour. Pasqual can watch ;

Then, I : so shall your mind have full repose.

Good night. [GARDA *and* PASQUAL *go out.*]

Osmunda.

OSM. Yes.

URB. What is the hour?

OSM. Midnight, or near it.

URB. Time to sleep. Good night.

Sleep—you must sleep. To-morrow we shall talk.

[OSMUNDA *is reluctant to leave him.*
She lifts the lamp as if to take it
with her.]

No ; leave the light.

[OSMUNDA *replaces the lamp.*]

What were you reading? [*takes up the book.*]

Ah!

The life of Agis : genius against the world.

Something of me, there ; something of my fate.

To-morrow—we shall try to understand.

[OSMUNDA *goes out slowly.*]

Genius against the world. . . . I should have
made

Saturnia my wife. *There was a gauntlet*

In the brazen face of custom! . . . But I
feared . . .

Is this my body's weakness? No ; great men
Betray no fault of instinct, no distress
Of soul, no doubt of self in their infirmities :
But here am I, confronted with my heart
At last, a simpleton, maybe a knave !
To laugh at policy, to over-ride
Wisdom, authority, experience,
To break with all the ragged past, and be
The demiurge of order and a time
Stamped with my image—is to chafe
Mankind, and mark my power and daring,
carved

In deep amazement and a world-wide frown,
Is to read triumph in a storm of hate.
But to espouse my mother's maid, a slave,
Already mine, as everybody knew ?
Oh, no ! the hero dreads a meaning smile,
The lifted shoulder and the current jest—

"The king? Our Urban? What can you
expect?

He took to wife his mistress!" There I
am!

There is the specious magnanimity
That tossed away a fortune; impotence
Pretending royal immunity—to lull
The inward sting, and shirk the stress of
life.

I should have married her I love, because
I love as lovers and as women love;
No pastime, but my life. Then had my
strength

Been matched with loyal fate on equal terms;
But having done dishonour to myself
In the great passion by which the world
endures,

A bridge without a keystone, all my hopes
Crumble to dust and vanish in the gulf. . . .
To-morrow in the battle I can die. [*sleeps.*]

Re-enter OSMUNDA. She looks about interrogatively; crosses to the couch and bends over
URBAN. *Then she unfolds the curtain*
and sits on the chair. LUCIAN appears
in the tree.

OSM. He must have spoken in his sleep.

[A clock strikes. She counts the hour
listlessly.]

One . . . twelve.

[LUCIAN enters by the window. His
appearance, manner, voice are now
those of a man of resolution and
hardihood. OSMUNDA utters a
smothered scream on seeing LUCIAN,
and signs to him to be silent.
LUCIAN takes her hand and leads
her to the window.]

URB. (*dreaming.*) A hideous blow! . . .

Saturnia!

LUC. (*giving OSMUNDA a letter.*) It is not

Your writing ; but I came because a way
Was shown me.

OSM. (*reading the letter.*) Traitors in the
palace !

LUC. No ;
A deliverer !

[*puts his arm about her, and draws her
nearer the window.*]

OSM. Lucian ! so tyrannous !

LUC. No way for me but to be tyrannous ;
'Tis cowardly to say, " Thus fate ordained !"
Defeated men must fester in disgrace,
Or cut their throats, or die contending still :
I learnt that verdict in the bitter loss
Of you : yet by a miracle I now
Revoke it, and outroot the tangled wrong
My vacillation wrought.—Come.

OSM. (*returning the letter.*) But you know
This writing is not mine !

LUC. It says the truth,

Whoever wrote it. Oh, I heard the whole
Iliad of misery ; the petty spite,
The indignities, the mortifying scorn
Your husband deals you.

OSM. Not one word is true !

LUC. Your father told me all.

OSM. *He* lied who said

My husband scorned me.

LUC. Then your father lied,

And laced the lie with oaths.—You love your
husband ?

Do you love Urban ?

URB. (*dreaming*). Her neck is like a lily.

LUC. This is no time to stand on wooing
terms !

Answer directly. Did you marry Urban
To please your father, or did your father
lie

In that confession too ?

OSM. That was no lie.

LUC. You loved me when you married
Urban? Speak!

I was disloyal to myself and you.

Were *you* unfaithful?

OSM. (*faintly*). To myself and you.

LUC. Then must we end this infamy, and
break

The prison of our love. Your father's roof
Shall shelter you; and you shall be my wife,
When I have dragged this Urban from his hold,
And thrust him headless in unhallowed ground.

*[with one foot on the window-ledge, one
hand on the tree, and the other on
OSMUNDA'S arm.]*

Fear nothing: 'tis the tree of life!

OSM. (*recoiling*). No! no!

URB. (*dreaming*). Remember, headsman;
together, with one stroke.

*[starts up awake; and, hearing OS-
MUNDA'S voice, listens motionless.]*

OSM. Oh, Lucian, leave me to make up
my mind

Alone! My father's ill-used power compelled
My spirit once; and now you and my love
Drive me beyond myself. I must assure
My heart, unmoved by the profound control
Of yours beside me beating, that my choice
To-night is my *own will*. Leave me alone.

LUC. And if I do, how shall I know your
choice?

OSM. The window—I shall open it again.

LUC. But you have grown in power! . . .
Decide alone.

[*goes out by the window, which OS-*
MUNDA immediately closes. She
then fills a glass with water, places
it on the table, and drops into it
the poison from her pomander, which,
after dissolving, leaves the water
colourless. URBAN watches her.]

OSM. This is the choice—my husband,
death, or love.

Not *life*; I thought I chose that once, but
found

Only a husband: women have no life.

I was, I am my husband's: shall I pass

From one man to another like a slave

That must belong to somebody? Blind love

Would have me Lucian's: were Lucian by
my side

I could not bid him go again without me!

That was a conquest! [*raises the glass.*]

And should I so decide

This will maintain my victory over love!

[*replaces the glass; sits.*]

Now, let me choose. My husband, death, or
love?

[*rises slowly; crosses the room, and lays
her hand on the curtain. URBAN
keeps out of sight.*]

I will not, dare not leave this beaten man ;
Conspire his downfall, triumph in his death,
And reign his conqueror's bride. Here lies
my fate,

My woman's duty ; here, my peace of mind !

*[flings the curtain aside and starts back
with a cry on seeing URBAN.]*

URB. What poison's this ? What tragedy,
bestowed

And slumbering in your marriage-bed, awakes
Uncoils and wonders where to strike ? How
long

Has death been consort of your thoughts ? I
deemed

You still the tender woman men are taught
To prize most for a mate ; whose love takes
heart

With marriage only ; and whose child acquits
The pensive shame that haunts her sweet
desires.

OSM. The woman never jealous, who forgives

The unrepentant, loves the sinner more ;
The fabulous sweet monster men solace
Their self-conceit with ! There are none such,
Urban !

I, least of all, approach the inhuman thing
Your fancy fondled. . . . Shall I say it all ?

URB. Though it should flay my soul.

OSM. (*handling her pomander*). This venom,
fetched

By castaways from shores beyond the dawn
Where all the region is a labyrinth
Of wonders, Hildebrand gave to his wife
Upon her wedding-morn ; for then the fate
Of Lombard women shook in the rough
scales

Of war. My mother passed the gift to me ;
And at my girdle it has always hung,
A treasured keepsake and the shrine of death.

At your election when you donned the crown,
And spoke your well-considered speech, I
 grasped
This fragrant casket, and beheld myself
Dead in my smooth and stainless wedding-
 sheets,
A virgin bride beyond the bridegroom's
 power
To waken with a whisper. Lucian's love
And mine seemed greater than the world,
 than life,
Power and the name of queen ; marriage with
 you,
Warm from a harlot's bed—a common shame
That women undergo—appeared as foul
As to be shackled to a leper maimed
And mildewed with his malady. And yet
I was so weak I did not dare to die.
 URB. So strong, I think,—You hid your
 hate of me ?

OSM. It vanished with your kisses, Urban.

Why

Are we poor women made so!

URB. That the world

May never cease.—You learned to love me
then?

OSM. I thought so; you were gentle and
abashed;

Observed my moods; and so devoutly begged
Where you might take, that with my body
soon

I worshipped you. How could I help it,
Urban?

URB. But it was not love?

OSM. No; not like my love
For Lucian—now, I know.

URB. How came he here?

OSM. I scarcely understand. Not with
my will!

Urban! You cannot think——

URB. Nothing of you
I think except divinely.

Enter Nurse from behind the screen.

OSM. What do you want?

NURSE. I'm sure the child's bewitched ;
It tosses, sobs, and knits its brows and stares.

[OSMUNDA *motions her away.*]

You bade me call you if it would not rest.

URB. Go to our child.

OSM. And come again to you
When she has fallen asleep?

URB. Yes, come to me.

[OSMUNDA *and the Nurse go out.*

URBAN, *fascinated by the poison,*
raises the glass.]

Was this poured out for me? A draught of
death,

The only true elixir ! I have filled

The land with woe—carnage, and fire and
mourning ;

And for a dream troubled the lives of women
Who gave me love and duty! That I, who
left

My foes unwatched, and made a laughing-
stock

Of him I should have won at any cost,
Or promptly killed— *[laughs ruefully.]*

That I must set about

To reconstruct the world!—If I drink this

It shall appear I overtaxed my strength

And died expectedly. . . .

*[takes a glass from the sideboard ; pours
water into it, and places it instead
of the poisoned one.]*

She must not know, were I to do this
thing. . . . *[opens the window.]*

That was her signal. Lucian, . . . What is
best ?

Saturnia. . . . I must not think of her.

[*is standing behind the leaf of the window, looking at the glass against the light. LUCIAN, re-entering by the window, thrusts the leaf against URBAN'S arm, and the glass falls. LUCIAN does not hear the crash, as his sword clanks on the window-sill; he goes a few steps into the room, and meets OSMUNDA, who re-enters from behind the screen, alarmed by the noise.*]

LUC. Osmunda, mine in love and deed!

OSM. No! No!

LUC. Why is your window open? You shall *not*

Repent!

OSM. I did not open it. But where
Is Urban? Have you killed him?

URB. (*stepping from the window*). I am here.

LUC. Mine, and the world's rash enemy!

URB. The world

Will never beat a better-tempered foe.

[LUCIAN *attacks*. URBAN *is powerless to resist him.*]

OSM. Lucian! For shame! Look, he
can hardly stand.

Re-enter PHILADELPHUS *ushering* HILDE-
BRAND, THRASIMUND, LUDOLF, ADAL-
BERT, Lords and Soldiers. *Except* PHILA-
DELPHUS, *all stare astonished at* LUCIAN,
who is equally surprised.

VOICES. The king!

URB. (*under his breath*). The king.

LUC. What mystery is this?

PHIL. I know the origin of both your
wonders.

THRA. That can be told again. Now,
Lombards, strike

For liberty! [URBAN *is attacked.*]

OSM. (*hanging on HILDEBRAND'S arm*). Oh,
father, spare his life!

HILD. (*flinging OSMUNDA aside*). I have
no child until his blood be shed.

OSM. No child!

[*lifts the glass and holds it up. All
look at her inquiringly.*]

This is my weapon! I hold a poison here
That kills like lightning. If one blow be
struck

I drink and die.

(*to LUCIAN*). Give me my husband's life!

URB. Oh tenderest conscience, there your
poison lies!

[*points to the broken glass and then to
that in her hand.*]

That is as innocent as your fair soul—
Think what you please. Have at me! This
is best!

I shall die fighting with my back to the wall.

[URBAN *is again attacked, and his sword struck from his hand at once. He steps forward to meet their points.*
OSMUNDA, *desperate, drags* LUCIAN *between* URBAN *and the Lords.*]

OSM. Save him ! save him !

LUC. But he wishes death.

OSM. He is ill and weak ; he left his bed
to-day

Against all counsel.

(*on her knees*). Lucian, save my husband.

LUC. Stand back !

[*All the Lords fall back except* HILDE-
BRAND.]

Stand back ! [HILDEBRAND *also steps back.*]

I spare your husband's life

If you consent never to see him more.

OSM. (*still on her knees*). I . . .

LUC. Silence ! Yes or no is life or death.

OSM. (*faintly*). Yes.

[*rises, watching URBAN intently.*]

HILD. (*fiercely*). Then there is no peace in Lombardy!

LUC. The peace of Lombardy shall be secured

By Urban's exile.

URB. (*mournfully*). Exile!

[*sees his sword on the ground, and with a joyful cry stoops for it; but OSMUNDA picks it up before he can reach it.*]

OSM. You must live!

URB. (*looks fixedly at OSMUNDA. Then including LUCIAN and HILDEBRAND in a haughty glance*). The world is wide. Beyond the Adrian sea

I'll carve an eastern kingdom for myself.

TWENTY YEARS ELAPSE.

over

ACT V

NIL NISI BONUM

SCENE.—*St. Michael's Square, Pavia. A narrow street of lofty houses enters the square at the back of the stage. The Royal Palace is on the right of the square ; on the left the Church of St. Michael with lofty porch. Near the centre of the square is a veiled statue. From the door of the Royal Palace a draped gangway leads to a platform beside the statue. Steps ascend to the platform in front and behind. The houses in the square and in the street are decorated with flags, banners and garlands. Two streets enter the square on either side.*

It is summer time, about an hour after noon. When the curtain rises the platform is guarded by soldiers, a crowd is entering leisurely from all sides, the people are taking their places at the windows.

From the back a Vinedresser, a Shepherd carrying his crook, and a Blacksmith with a leather bag, rush down to the front where a street enters on the right.

VINE. This is the stand!

SHEP. Ay, here they pass in throngs.

BLACK. *(holding out the bag to the people entering).*

Money, money! hand it out!

Golden crowns or copper groats!

Though we're poor our hearts are stout,

THE THREE. And our stomachs and our
throats.

MERC. *(giving money).* What lusty lungs!

You're sorry rogues, I fear.

BLACK. Your humble servants, sir ! Servants
of all

Exalted citizens who can themselves
Be merry, and who think it sin to see
A poor man sober on a day like this.

*[singly and in groups people enter, and
most of them contribute.]*

*Enter URBAN by a street on the left. His beard
and hair are white, his cheeks sunken, his
eyes hollow. He is dressed like a beggar
with wallet and staff. No one regards him
and he heeds no one. He looks at the
statue indifferently ; at the Palace long and
earnestly. Then he seeks a place to rest,
and at last, by permission of one of the
soldiers, sits on the steps to the gangway.
He takes from his wallet a crust of bread
and uncovers his head.*

URB. Our daily bread ! Remember, "You
must live."

Enter JUNIPERT, old, dishevelled, dressed as in the first act, but with some incongruous attempts at finery, and a conspicuous rent or two in his cloak.

SHEP. Golden crowns, or copper groats!

JUNI. (*feeling his pockets*). I had . . . why, gentlemen, no greater joy . . .

Ah, here! I've chased it home. Drink the Queen's health,

Queen Sybil. Yes, I knew her father well.

BLACK. You knew King Urban?

JUNI. Did I? I was there

When Urban donned the headsman's dress to change

The luck of Lombardy.

BLACK. (*looking closely at JUNIPERT*). You—let me see:

For twenty years, horseman and footman, rich

And poor, I've known in Pavia every face.
Why, you are Junipert, the ballad-monger!
Where have you been this many and many a
year?

JUNI. Ill, sir. But not to-day. I would
have rent

My grave to see King Urban's brat unveil
Her father's statue; and I meant besides
To toss my old cap at her coronation;
But that was past my strength. Have you
been there?

BLACK. And back again, not half an hour
ago. *[giving JUNIPERT money.]*

Take it, man! Not a mite; no, not from
you!

Our old cloak must be clouted against the
winter.

In your own way, you are a craftsman too,
And pipers don't pay fiddlers.

JUNI. Poverty,

By right of proverb, parts good company ;

But——

THE THREE. Though we're poor our
hearts are stout,

And our stomachs and our throats.

*Enter PHILADELPHUS, hardly older in
appearance, handsomely dressed.*

PHIL. Money? I give it only when it's
earned.

SHEP. (*catching PHILADELPHUS by the neck
with his crook*). Come, come! Pay toll,
old grumbler.

PHIL. Nasty villains!

You fail in common sense ; it's ruinous
For able-bodied men to beg in public.

BLACK. Pay, pay!

PHIL. As a philosopher, I pay ;

But as a man, I . . . [*gives money.*]

JUNI. Well, old enemy.

PHIL. Above ground still! What savoury
salt preserves

So frail a body and so light a mind?

JUNI. Still hypercritical! I'm kept alive
By sheer sincerity, which often saves
More sinful limbs and scantier brains than
mine.

PHIL. Sincerity? a wanton-virtuous word;
A pitiful petitionary word;
A mere excuse! I'll tell you what it is:
It's crass stupidity; a strength of mind;
A root of character that grows the fool,
The beggar and the outcast. Poetry,
Divine sincerity, is undeveloped
Craftiness, intelligence in the rough.
And I maintain that as sincerity
Is to stupidity, so intelligence
Must always be to insincerity.
There, the philosopher's golden rule of
three!

BLACK. You prating liar!

[*flings a coin in PHILADELPHUS'S face.*]

Take your dross again!

We've no blood-drinkers here!

VINE. Blood money! How?

BLACK. Look at him! Know him yet?

That's Philadelphus.

SHEP. What! Him that sold King
Urban?

PHIL. An ancient story!

BLACK. But we remember it to-day!

PHIL. Good fellows——

VOICES. Hi! Beat him; stone him; strip
him; hang him, dog!

[*PHILADELPHUS runs out, pursued by
the crowd.*]

JUNI. Fate of philosophy! Poetic justice!

URB. (*approaching JUNIPERT*). Is this some
kind of masque—some play?

JUNI. A play?

URB. You spoke of Sybil—Queen Sybil.
Who is she?

JUNI. The daughter of our Lombard hero,
Urban.

Now, where have you been gathering ignorance?

URB. I came across the world to die at
home.

JUNI. To die! Not yet a while!

URB. But this is Pavia?

JUNI. The very Pavia Urban loved—my
friend,

King Urban.

URB. Who are you?

JUNI. One Junipert.

I was King Urban's friend, and laureate
To the divine Saturnia.

URB. What?—who?

JUNI. She that is now the Abbess of St.
Anne's,

The wealthiest nun in Lombardy ; you know
King Urban gave her half his patrimony.

I have a treasure hidden in my house—

A crown she gave me once, a golden crown.

URB. And Lucian ?

JUNI. Lucian ! Five years beneath the sod.

You *are* a stranger !

URB. I forsook this land

Long before Lucian's death.

JUNI. Then you must know

That Lucian died of disappointment ; nibbled

To death by slow chagrin, the Lombards
think,

Because Osmunda would never marry him.

URB. She would not marry him.

JUNI. Osmunda would not.

URB. Osmunda.

JUNI. Yes ; she died a year ago.

URB. Osmunda died.

JUNI. Osmunda, Urban's wife.

Her latter days were happy.—People say
Urban himself is dead ; but I believe
He sleeps somewhere enchanted in the east.
Mark me ; our army starts to-day to fight
The conquering Franks—Oh, these are high-
strung times !

Well, if you live it out, you'll hear of this,
Or I'm no prophet. When the battle bends
Against us, and the Lombard banners droop,
Upon a warhorse, thundershod, behold
In burning mail, a godlike champion,
Whose single arm shall stem discomfiture—
Urban, come back again !

URB. Come back again.

JUNI. Well, as I told you, Lucian in the
grave,
Old Hildebrand—

URB. Hildebrand ! Thrasimund !

JUNI. Thrasimund ! Worm's meat ages
since ! His wife

Married a ruffling knave who ruined her,—
So Hildebrand, the toughest statesman known,
He named his grandchild queen, and crowns
her now,
War being at our doors, to give the state
Stability. With filial tenderness
She on her coronation day unveils
This statue of her father, Urban the Great.

URB. Urban the Great.

*[The door of the Palace is thrown open,
and Trumpeters enter, sounding a
flourish.]*

URBAN *hangs inertly on his staff, then
seeking support, leans in the angle
between the platform and the steps.*

*At the sound of the trumpets the crowd
pours into the square, the windows
fill with spectators, and a number
of men climb to the top of the
church porch.*

The Royal Procession then enters from the Palace, including HILDEBRAND, very old and withered, but still erect; ALMERIC, ULRIC, PASQUAL, and the DUKE OF GARDA, now arrived at middle age; SYBIL wearing the iron crown of Lombardy, her royal train borne by pages, and attended by ladies, and by SATURNIA in the dress of an abbess, and two nuns.

SYBIL pauses as she crosses the threshold of the Palace, and the crowd bursts into a roar of welcome. URBAN staggers out of the corner, and shading his eyes with his hand, looks at his daughter. His intelligence quickens; he moves towards her. Soldiers attempt to intercept him. Struggling with them me-

chanically, he endeavours to reach the gangway.]

SYB. (*impulsively to the Soldiers*). Oh, let the old man be; he seems wayworn.

VOICES. Long live the queen!

JUNI. Heaven help her tender heart!

[*With the exception of SYBIL, SATURNIA, HILDEBRAND, the DUKE OF GARDA, and one or two ladies, the members of the Royal party descend to a portion of the square, in front of the platform reserved for them. URBAN, JUNIPERT, the Blacksmith, the Shepherd, and the Vinedresser, with a few others, are pressed by the throng into this reserved space.*]

HILD. May it please your majesty. My lords, and folk

Of all degrees, when we in wrath expelled
The world-embracing aim, the patient love

Of all things human, and the mastery
Of men and motives that in Urban formed
A power, prevailing now more than the whole
Precedent fame of our unconquered race,
We blindly wrought the heaviest sin that
time

Has yet recorded against Lombardy.
To-day repairs as far as afterthought
Can make amends for past misdeeds, the ill
We did ourselves and him. His soul is
young

Again in our young queen ; his prophecy
Directs our arms though late ; and in the
midst

Of Pavia, his image shall remain,
A public inspiration, as in our hearts
The poignant savour of his memory dwells.

URB. (*to himself*). Old Hildebrand.

[SYBIL *unveils the statue.*]

VOICES. God save the queen !

SYB. My people, [*pointing to the statue*],
He is your captain, and through me he
speaks

Once more the message none who heard
believed,

Though all remembered it because the words
Were branded on their hearts. My father said,
Appealing for his life : " We must be first,
Though everlasting war cement each course
Of empire with our blood ; or cease to be,
Our very name and language in dispute."

Help me, my father, lest I break down and
weep!—

That which he bade the Lombards do, the
Franks

Have done ; and we against their empire
fight

For power, for life itself. We have a soldier
Worthy to lead the Lombards—my father's
friend ; [*gives her hand to GARDA.*]

I say to you, "Be great, and make us great!"

Oh, I have garnered all my father's words,
And wear them like a rosary in my thought.
He said, and reverently I say it too—
"I am become this land, this Lombardy,
With famous cities zoned from sea to sea,
From Alp to Apennine; and in my heart
The Lombards have their home—the quick,
the dead;
The ancient story, and the flying days,
We'll fill with noble deeds!"

VOICES. God save the queen!

[*While his daughter speaks URBAN
gradually acquires a proud attitude
like that of his statue.*]

VOICE. Saturnia!

2ND VOICE. Ay, ay, Saturnia!

[*URBAN shrinks into himself.*]

A MAN (*rising suddenly on the top of the*

church porch). Yes ; some of us keep things in mind. It's well

To have a hero ; and we need one too !

But who can worship him who cast aside

His noble wife ; and, when his enterprise

Was ripe for action, wantoned time away

In masques and childish tricks and revelry ?

[*The Man sinks down immediately and is not seen again.*]

BLACK. That's a bold fellow. Why, he's gone already !

(*to* URBAN). Father, this Urban had his faults and flaws.

URB. He had one fault.

BLACK. One only ? What was that ?

URB. Himself.

SHEP. Right ! Something nibbled at the root.

VINE. All said and done, a wolf among the flock.

URB. She leads a holy life—Saturnia?

BLACK. Ay, now she leads a holy life.

VOICES. The queen!

SYB. (*having spoken with SATURNIA*). You
call on one who is most dear to me.

My mother in her agony when death
Became impatient, and she too, longed to go,
Accepted not the hand that beckoned her
Till she had seen Saturnia. Then these two
Forgave each other silently with tears,
For neither found an apter eloquence
To spend the treasure of their burdened
hearts.

And since that time I know no closer friend
Than she who now will wind the tangle up
Of that old lie no honest heart believed.

VOICES. Saturnia! The Abbess! Hear the
Abbess!

SAT. It is to clear King Urban's fame I
speak. [URBAN *listens with bent head.*]

Her gracious majesty, Queen Sybil, knows
Her father's reign was spotless. Not more
true

To Lombardy than to his marriage vow,
By day or night, he never sought me once ;
Nor met me ; nor with any deed or gift
Approached my memory. The guilt was
mine :

I, unrepentant, desperate, sent him word,
And plausibly secured an audience ;
Where he rebuked me, even when my craft
of love

That had ensnared my own desire, intrigued
Most cunningly for his. Relentless foes
Interpreted our meeting impiously ;
But I would have the whole world know at
last,

Although my name be therefore held in scorn,
That he was loftier than men—in love,
In triumph, in defeat, a deity.

URB. (*crying out*). No! No!

HILD. What now?

SOLDIER. My lord, the vagabond
The queen protected.

SYB. Would he speak with me?

URB. Come nearer—nearer yet.

[SYBIL comes to the verge of the platform
immediately above URBAN.]

Whose child are you?

Your father's image—so the flatterers say?

HILD. Off with him! Scourge him!

SYB. Gently, Hildebrand.—

They say I have my father's look and poise.

URB. Osmunda's mouth; and that's a
gracious gift.

SYB. You knew my father?

URB. I knew him—impotent,
In poverty, alone; an exile gnawed
Remorselessly by dogged memories.
Discrowned and hopeless, like a star unsphered

He sank beneath the nadir to the abyss
And noisome dregs of being, with the mad-
man,

The outlaw and the rat, ere Lombardy
Had well begun to wonder at his fall.

PASQ. Insane old man! He had the
highest heart

That ever beat with life.

URB. I doubt it not;

But that was broken. For his head, 'twas
warped

With waste ambition; and he saw the world
Misshapen like a semblance in a pool

The wind perturbs. He that was stuck by
chance

A flaunting feather in the age's cap,

Essayed to be the sword of destiny,

And with the dust and straw was swept aside,

A bitten quill used once to write a name.

PASQ. Ignoble, envious wretch!

VOICES. Pluck out his tongue!

Trample him in the dirt! Tear him in bits!

[URBAN *is set upon and maltreated by the crowd.*]

SYB. Deliver him! No blood must stain to-day!

[Soldiers *rescue URBAN from the crowd. He is unconscious and bleeding.*]

SAT. They've mauled him pitilessly. Come down with me.

[SATURNIA *and the Nuns assist URBAN.*]

GARD. Slanders die hard, but here has one been killed

By a brave woman. As for this new lie
Of Urban's life in exile, I can count
A score at least before it, spread abroad
By beggars, palmers, jugglers, mountebanks,
All circumstantial, opportunely launched
To startle fancy, or elicit alms;
All equally authentic.—Forward there,

Or time will beat us.—Madam, your soldiers
wait

To greet King Urban's daughter and their
queen.

SYB. Lead on, my father's friend!

GARD. To victory!

King Urban's spirit shall triumph in our arms.

[The Royal procession descends from the platform by the steps behind, and goes out accompanied and followed by the cheering crowd. The spectators leave the windows, and SATURNIA and the Nuns are left with URBAN.]

SAT. (*supporting URBAN'S head*). He lives.

Go quickly and prepare a room.

[The Nuns go out.]

URB. (*opening his eyes*). Saturnia!

[SATURNIA draws away from him; but looking again into his eyes she recognizes him, and with a low cry

her head sinks beside his. A passage of triumphal music is heard in the distance. URBAN gets up on his knees, and listens eagerly, one hand on the ground, the other on SATURNIA'S shoulder.]

URB. The war is over now!

My daughter, Sybil, Queen of the Lombards,
rides

Victorious into Pavia.—Ask me not

What I have been! My life went swiftly down

Beneath the harrow: I came home to die;

Let no one know; bury me in your heart.

[The music comes nearer.]

My daughter Sybil rides victoriously!

The gates of death are open! Have no fear!

How will Saturnia greet me when we wake?

SAT. Oh, I will greet you with a kiss
and say

Good morning in the land beyond the grave!

URB. Where is that lying fellow on the porch?

Urban was noble—do you hear?—and great.
Take this from me: Learn to forgive yourself;

Though you were Judas, learn to forgive yourself.—

Saturnia, help me up!

[SATURNIA *helps him to his feet.*]

I cannot die

Beneath the harrow nailed into the earth.

I would . . . die . . . standing.

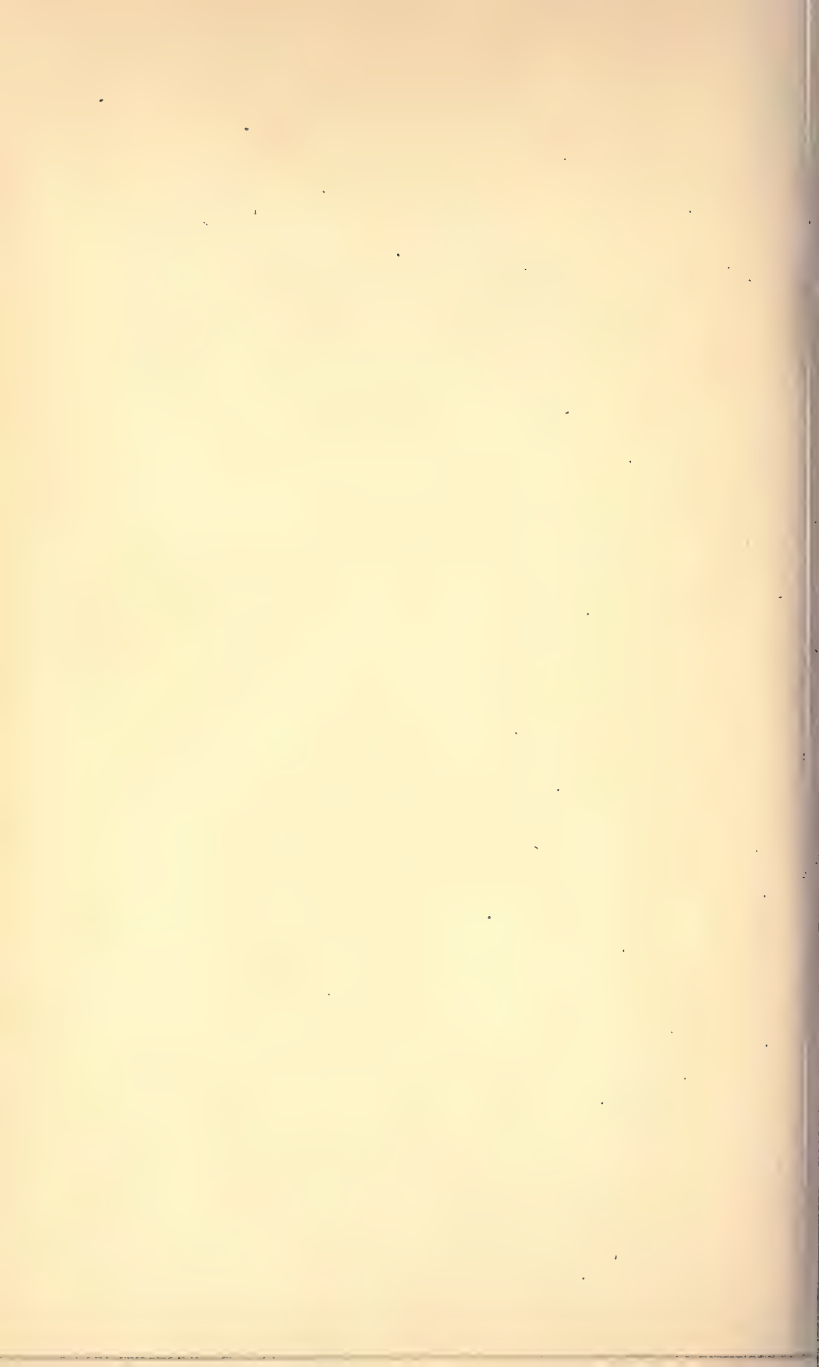
[*His head falls on SATURNIA'S shoulder, and he dies.*]

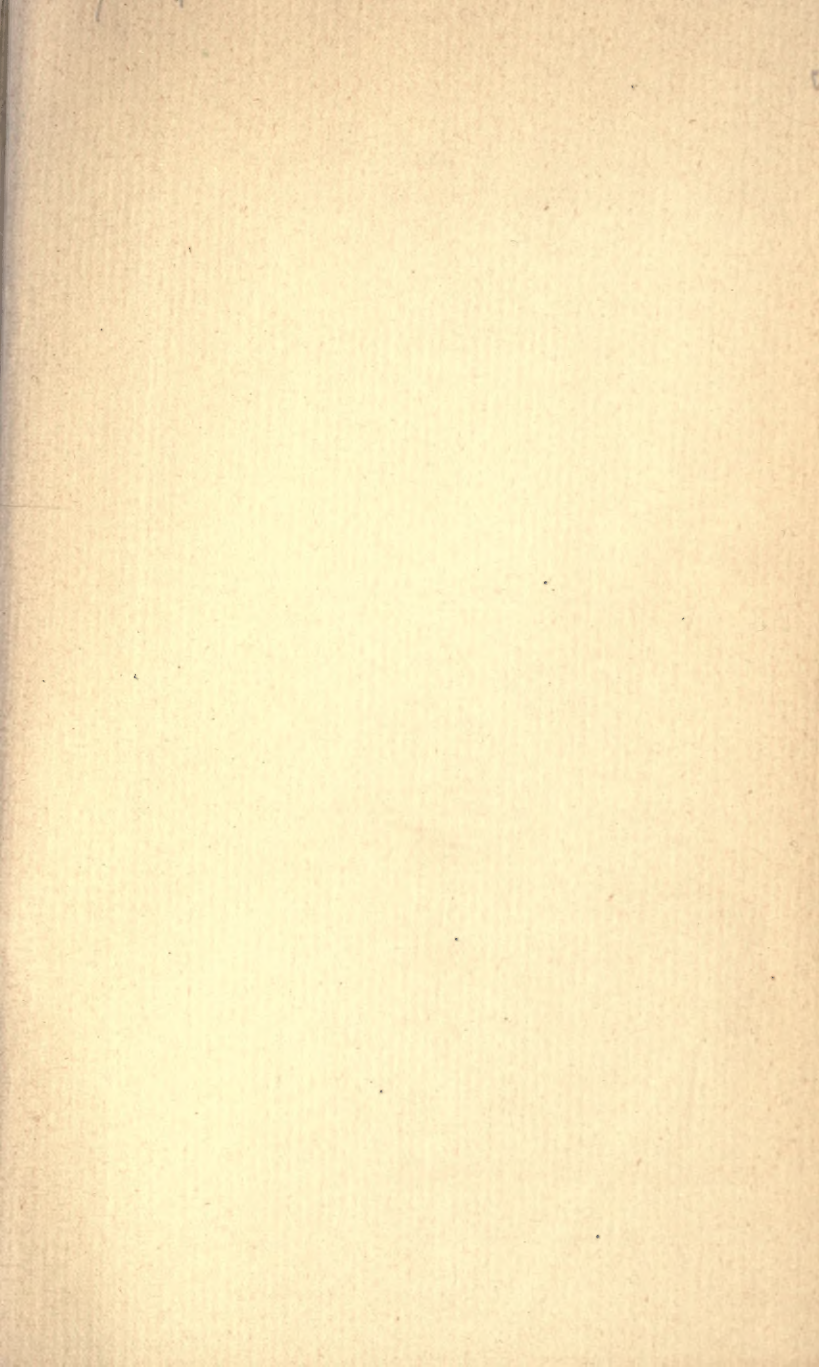
Enter, crossing the street at the back, the van of the Lombard army with the crowd shouting joyfully.

THE END

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